This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

BIBLE
STORIES.

1840.

52.

THE CREATION.

BIBLE STORIES,

From the Creation to the Conquest of Canaan.

BY G. M. BUSSEY.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY

R. WESTALL, R. A., AND JOHN MARTIN.

LONDON:

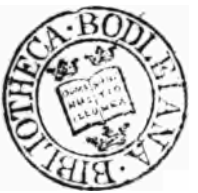
JOSEPH THOMAS, 1, FINCH LANE, CORNHILL;

SOLD BY

THOMAS TEGG; AND SIMPKIN, MARSHALL, & CO.

1840.

52.



Palmer & Clayton, Printers, Crane Court.

PREFACE.

THE chief object of this little work has been, to give a connected narrative of the principal events recorded in the earlier books of the Bible, adapted to the perusal of the young, whose reason and imagination generally require assistance to enable them to comprehend some of the passages and allusions in the Scriptures, but who turn with distaste from a formal commentary.

The writer has not, more than seemed to him absolutely necessary, departed from the statements and language of the inspired authors; and where he has been induced to make additions or alterations, these have been introduced for the purpose of explanation, or of rendering the scene under description more distinct and impressive to youth, and not merely by way of embellishment.

In the tenets which the author has incidentally sought to inculcate, he has been guided by the principles proposed to himself by the great Milton, in his *Paradise Lost*, namely, to endeavour, as far as in him lay, to

> "——— assert eternal Providence,
> And justify the ways of God to man."

London, October, 1840.

BIBLE STORIES.

THE CREATION AND FALL OF MAN.

In six days God created the universe—the heavens, the earth, the sea, and all that they contain. At his word all things were moulded into beauty, and assumed the places assigned to them. On the seventh day, the sun shone over the new-made and perfect world, serene and lovely, without sign of cloud or

storm. The Almighty saw and blessed his work, and ordained a sabbath of rest, to be kept for ever.

Blossoms and fruit, all things pleasant to the eye and good for food, sprung forth without thought or toil. Happiness was diffused through all nature; but man, whom God had created in his own image, and on whom He intended to bestow greater bliss than upon any other living being, was the peculiar care of his Maker. In a region the most fertile and delicious that the imagination can picture, a garden had been expressly planted for the residence of Adam and his beautiful spouse—the first created man and woman, for whose use and enjoyment the sun had been placed in the skies to give its light by day, and the moon and stars shed their pale lustre on the night. This garden, which was called Paradise, or the Garden of Eden, contained all the choicest productions of the earth, in trees, flowers, fruit, and herbs. The stately cedar of Lebanon reared its head above the foliage of the orange, the apple, the cherry, the lime, and the myrtle: the clustering grape was twined round the stems of fragrant spice trees. The most luxuriant, the richest, the brightest, whether for taste or hue, of delicious fruit and incense-breathing flowers, were spread around in profusion.

The companions of Adam and Eve in these happy bowers were the living creatures which God had given them to be in

subjection to their wishes. The strong lion bowed to them, and gambolled among the deep and shady coverts through which they were all to wander without fear or shame. The elephant was delighted to get from them an approving word or smile. The lamb, and the timid and graceful gazelle, tripped along the lawns, or sported on the margin of the clear streams which meandered through meadows decked in all the pomp of eastern spring, and would play with and be in turn caressed by the speckled leopard or the crouching tiger. Birds, of the most gorgeous plumage, flitted among the trees and shrubs, or soared with bolder wing high into the air, their golden and crimson pinions glancing in the sunlight; while others charmed the ear with melody, which the most perfect music of our days but faintly imitates. In the lakes and streams which here abounded, were fishes of the most exquisite colour and form, darting hither and thither in pastime, without being afraid of each other, or of the hand occasionally put forth to take them for nearer inspection and admiration.

Hand in hand through this blissful garden often wandered our first parents, not unfrequently meeting and conversing with angels of heaven, who had been enjoined to attend to all their wants and wishes, even before they were expressed. The attributes of the Almighty, the mysteries of the creation.

the duties of heavenly and earthly beings, were explained and impressed upon the man and the woman by these celestial visitants; and they were grateful for the goodness of their Maker, and happy in partaking the favours He had conferred upon them.

But when He had made man, and endowed him with an angelic form and reasoning and reflecting powers, the Lord had imposed upon him one condition, the breach of which was to incur the forfeiture of all that He had conferred. In the midst of the Garden of Eden two trees were planted—the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and the tree of life. "Of every tree of the garden," said the Lord, "thou mayest freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." This was intended to test man's gratitude and obedience. Surely it was a simple and inadequate return for the bounty He had lavished upon the creatures of His hands.

It would be impossible to describe the felicity of the man and woman, and of all the creatures in this Paradise. They had no cares to molest them, no toils to weary, no knowledge of fear, or hate, or any evil passion, to disturb or vex them; but all was quiet love, and joy. They were innocent and unconscious of the meaning of sin; and, therefore, although

they were naked, they were strangers to shame and confusion. Their morning and evening hymns and prayers ascended to the source of their existence. Their days were spent in recreation, or in such employment as yielded delight without producing painful fatigue; and at night, refreshing slumbers brought renewed vigour for the coming morn. Death, although threatened them as the penalty of their transgression, was a mysterious and undefined thing; terrible, because denounced by the Deity, but not the better understood.

Among the angels, whom God had created before He made the earth, were some who had rebelled against their Maker's will; and, attempting to resist His power, had been cast out of heaven into a place of gloom, and pain, and sorrow. Satan, the chief of these rebellious angels, had heard of the creation of the world from his place of punishment with envy and hatred; and when he learned the injunction respecting the tree of knowledge, he occupied himself unceasingly to devise means to bring upon man the wrath and displeasure, and, consequently, the threatened punishment, of the Almighty; not that it would lighten his own pain to behold the pain of others, but that, in the malice of his heart, he sought to provoke God against all that He had made, and to turn into bitterness and regret the pleasure of the Creator in the happiness of which He had been

the author. Now Satan was free to roam about wheresoever he would, except only that he could never re-enter the gates of heaven, from which he had been expelled.

Adam and Eve had not long been placed in Paradise, when Satan, prowling about the earth, discovered their abode, girt in by mountains and rocks, which formed an almost inaccessible wall around the garden. That this was the abiding-place of his intended victims he could scarcely fail to know from its construction, and from the happy spirits which hovered over it, ascending to heaven, or descending from the throne of God, bearing the desires of man, or the commands of the Deity. The gates of Paradise were guarded by angels appointed to protect the place from the entrance of unholy things. Around—above, the most jealous care was visible to secure the welfare of God's chosen creatures. Satan, pleased at this vigilance, which told how great was the Maker's love, and how great would, therefore, be His sorrow to inflict evil upon those for whom He had intended nothing but good, was not long in devising means to pass unobserved and unsuspected. As he had been the first to practise deceit in heaven, so also he was the first to introduce fraud upon earth. Spirits have power to take what shape they please. The wicked Satan can assume the appearance of an angel of light. He

now, however, transformed himself into the likeness of a serpent, one of the wisest creatures which the Lord had made, yet not likely, from its habits, to be questioned.

Impressed with the fear which always accompanies, and frequently betrays guilt, Satan, though in a new form, durst not attempt to enter Paradise by any of the gates where the stationed angels were; but, gliding up a steep ascent, he crossed the barrier by a track hitherto unattempted. The angels, having no guile or treachery in themselves, suspected no falsehood in others; and hence the author of all evil passed unnoticed into Eden.

He alighted at length in a pleasant dell; the banks of which were covered with bright green grass, and where

> "Under foot, the violet,
> Crocus, and hyacinth, with rich inlay,
> Broidered the ground."

In the midst ran a sweet brooklet, which, after leaping in fantastic beauty from ledge to ledge down the rocks from which it seemed to distil, flowed away into a broad lake, set about with groves of branching palm, cedar, aloes, and lemon-trees, and undergrown with thickets of eglantine, jessamine, and rose-briars. It was a place of perfect delight, where laughing Spring seemed to have thrown, in sport, her gayest living garland.

Here it was that the majestic tree of life, laden with bud, and bloom, and fruit, grew and flourished beside the more drooping but not less beautiful tree of knowledge. Both were untasted and untouched; for Adam, having no thought to disobey his Maker, had abstained from too near an approach to the forbidden fruit.

There might have shot a momentary relenting pang through the heart of the evil one as he paused to look around upon the happy spot into which he had obtruded; but if so, it quickly passed away. Through a long and verdant alley, leading from the lake already described, he quickly descried the happy inhabitants of the garden. The manly form, and noble bearing of the rather of mankind: his eyes beaming with affection, and his open and healthful countenance bespeaking the honesty and truth which had been implanted in his bosom, struck the observing fiend with awe, and he was fain to creep away among the flowers and grass, as the blissful pair approached the spot where, still in the serpent's form, the monster lay. From the conversation which he overheard, however, Satan was enabled to learn that Eve, though more beautiful in form and feature, was not endued with the same strength of mind and discernment as her husband; that she obeyed his will; and derived her chief pleasure from those things which appeared to afford most delight to him.

This knowledge was of importance, as it gave a greater prospect of success to the evil design which he meditated. The man, there seemed scarcely a hope to mislead from the path of rectitude, contrary to the express command he had received, and the stern unbending dictates of his mind; but the woman, more tender and confiding, more susceptible to momentary impressions, and deriving her very power from the yielding gentleness of her nature, might, he thought, be tempted to destruction. It was on Eve, therefore, that he resolved first to try his seductive influence.

Though following close on all their steps, and watching every moment, it was not immediately that an opportunity occurred for the temptation. Adam and Eve were mostly together, or when separate they were seldom alone. Angels attended them at their occupations and amusements, in their hours of rest, and in their gentle wanderings.

One day, however, when Adam, by some illusive appearance, which had been devised for that purpose by the evil spirit, was for a moment withdrawn from the side of his spouse, the serpent seized the opportunity to address her, cautiously questioning her concerning the fruit of the forbidden tree. He hinted not at disobedience; spoke not against the decree which had connected death—terrible and mysterious death—with the fruit of the tree of knowledge; he merely

mentioned that beautiful fruit, with casual and apparently unpremeditated allusion, as seeking to know its properties, though, in reality, by drawing her mind to the subject and exciting her curiosity, he knew that he was preparing her to listen, with unshrinking heart and unblushing brow, to more daring and more criminal proposals.

The seeds of ill are not slow of growth. Ere many days had passed from this first discourse with the evil spirit, Eve, who had pondered upon the words of the serpent, learned to stray more frequently than she had ever before done from her husband's side, and began to delight in solitary walks and meditations, especially in the sequestered bowers which encircled the forbidden tree. The serpent was at these times her most frequent companion—the serpent, with its sleek and glossy skin and brilliant colours, wreathing along in her pathway, and uttering eloquent and subtle words to beguile and destroy her. So soothing and flattering was the reptile's speech, so suited to her womanly capacity and feelings, to her sense of personal grace and beauty, that Eve grew vain, and impatient of the restraint imposed upon herself by her love for her husband, or enjoined by her husband out of regard for her own welfare, and the love of their Almighty Lord.

But it would be too painful to trace the downward progress of a mind and heart, which have once admitted a question on

things forbidden by the Deity, and by those whose knowledge and love have fitted them to become our guardians and preceptors. It is a rapid career from temptation to sin, from sin to punishment, and thence to late and long repentance.

When Eve had been sufficiently wrought upon to question the justice of her Maker, the serpent, no longer disguising his purpose, boldly proposed to the woman that she should eat of the fruit of the tree.

"Hath not God said," he asked, "that ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?"

And Eve answered: "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, 'Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.'"

And the serpent said unto the woman, "Ye shall not surely die! For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil."

But still Eve was unwilling to brave the Divine displeasure, on the mere assurance of a serpent that it should not lead to harm. She argued for some time, both with herself and the tempter, before she could be brought to reject the good counsel which she had hitherto obeyed, to walk in all things in the ways of God. At last, however, she had become

so much infected with the thoughts of her self-sufficiency; and so convinced that what the serpent had told her was true and not false, that she ventured to approach the tree of knowledge, and pluck and taste the forbidden fruit.

All nature instantly felt the wanton outrage. A few dark clouds ascended the horizon, the first that had obscured the glory of the skies of Eden; a few rain drops, the first that had been felt on earth, descended, like tears, as mourning the first crime. Eve felt a momentary shudder, and the air that played around her was cold and strange to her yet unpained limbs; but she knew not that she had already subjected herself to the curse of death and woe, and she continued to eat of the delicious fruit which was to give her knowledge of all things like the angels of God.

In a short time she espied Adam in the garden, leaning, more pensively than was customary with him, against a rocky bank, overlooking the dell in which were the trees of life and knowledge. In happy innocence of ill, the father of mankind was contemplating the works of the Creator, and directing his thoughts, full of love and gratitude, to the Author of his bliss. The serpent had already glided away into the thick shade, as soon as his evil work had been accomplished. Eve looked for him in vain, to counsel her how to act. The blush of shame suffused her cheek at the remembrance of her dis-

THE TEMPTATION.

obedience; and at first she thought of concealing herself from her husband's presence. But the knowledge she had derived from the fatal fruit gave her other hopes and ideas; and she at length issued forth from the thicket with a branch of the tree, containing some of the beautiful fruit, in her hand. With this she hastened to her husband; not however, as formerly, with unalloyed satisfaction and gladness to meet him, but feeling shame that she was naked, and conscious that she merited reproof.

Adam, who was absorbed in his meditations, perceived not the timidity and agitation of his spouse till she drew near; when questioning her, she proffered him the fruit, that he also might partake, and feel as she felt.

He at once knew too well what she had done, and his whole frame was shaken with fear and trembling. The proffered apple dropped from his hand, and he bent a stern and frowning look on Eve, and was about to speak in anger. But she, still beautiful and bashful, though her soul was heavy with conscious guilt, clung round her husband's neck, and wept when she beheld his altered look.

"What hast thou done?" said Adam. "Thou art lost irrevocably. The Almighty denunciation will soon fall upon thee, and thou wilt become subject to death and sorrow."

Eve, without daring to look up in his face, sobbed and lamented aloud.

"Alas!" exclaimed Adam, "I could not now live without thee: thou art bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh. Thou art the only being of my kind to love and cheer me. The curse must fall on both. Give me the fruit; and let me also eat and die."

But Eve already felt repentant; and now, knowing that the serpent had deceived and betrayed her, she would have dissuaded her husband from being a partner in her crime. But her example, the dread of being reduced to dwell in solitude, with nothing but the remembrance of her he loved, wrought too strongly on his mind to leave him freedom of thought or action. In an evil moment, Adam also plucked of the fruit and ate.

The sky instantly lowered, muttering thunder was heard above, and streaks of awful lightning played for a moment around the fatal tree of knowledge, rending its boughs, and scattering its fair bloom and fruit on the earth. Beasts and birds fled affrighted at the angry elements, seeking even to shun each other; for man and woman's disobedience had brought fear and passion, unknown while they were innocent, not only upon themselves but upon all living creatures. The

lion and the kid no longer lay down to repose in the same cavern; the timid hare and rabbit fled from before the hound, the wolf, and the fox. Hunger, thirst, new wants and new desires, followed almost instantly the introduction into the world of the new and forbidden knowledge. Pain, and toil, and death followed. The hawk struck with his sharp talons the pretty and defenceless wren; the eagle pounced upon the lamb; the lion attacked and mangled the ox: through all nature one animal became the prey of another, and death was at once felt to be abroad in the world.

The man and the woman saw the fearful desolation which their sin had wrought; and knowing that they had incurred the dreadful curse, they endeavoured to hide themselves from the Almighty and his angels. Penetrating into the darkest thickets they could find in the bowers of Paradise, they made themselves scanty raiment from the leaves of the fig-tree; and sought to conceal their shame and their persons from each other and from all eyes. Thus covered, but ill at ease in mind, they sat down on the margin of a pool, now turbid and thick with rain from the neighbouring hills, to weep and bewail their forlorn condition. Each began to accuse the other as the author of the ill which had befallen. Mistrust, suspicion, anger, had already supplanted peace and love in the breast of each. Mutual accusation and recrimination, instead of prayer,

thanksgiving, and joyful songs of praise and adoration, occupied the long and tedious hours, till the shadows of evening, no longer mild and beautiful, like the sweet twilight of a departing summer's day, but dull and dark with the leaden clouds of a hovering thunder-storm, began to close around the wall of Eden.

It was a sad and dreary evening for those who had lately been so full of happiness and kindness towards each other. Their terror seemed almost as unendurable as the death which had been denounced against them. As the daylight waned, their bosoms again began to subside to peace; and better thoughts and holier feelings resumed the empire of their minds. Subdued to penitence, they sought consolation by appealing in prayer to the Most High, for his grace and protection. The prayers of the contrite are never disregarded. The Lord heard the voices of his erring creatures, and sent his Spirit down to commune with and comfort them. In the grove, whither they had fled for concealment, they soon became conscious of the Divine presence. Still they dared not speak, nor stir, lest He, whose command they had broken, and whose goodness they had abused, should have come in anger. So when Adam heard the voice of the Lord, both he and the woman retreated further into the depths of the sylvan shade

's anger.

THE JUDGMENT OF ADAM AND EVE.

And God called unto Adam, and said unto him, "Where art thou?"

And Adam answered, "I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself."

And He said, "Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree whereof commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?"

And the man said, "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat."

And the Lord God said unto the woman, "What is this that thou hast done?"

And the woman said, "The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat."

And the Lord said unto the serpent, "Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field: upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life. And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." Unto the woman, the Lord said, "I will greatly multiply thy sorrow, in thy children and thy husband; and thy husband shall rule over thee." And unto Adam the words of the Lord were: "Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree of which I commanded thee,

saying, 'Thou shalt not eat of it;' cursed is the ground for thy sake: in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life: thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken; for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."

After He had denounced this sentence upon man, which, though dreadful in itself, contained a promise that the seed of the woman should 'bruise the serpent's head;' or, in other words, destroy the author of misery and death, the Almighty withdrew the brightness of his presence from his creatures—no longer able to sustain the sight of his majesty and glory. He left them not, however, without protection; the angels who had guard of Paradise, still had them in charge to see that no evil assailed them, and that the now fierce beasts of the forest and the glade abstained from offering them violence or harm.

These were mercies for which gratitude was still due; and even the curse was lighter than the disobedient pair had reason to expect. The tillage of the ground, by which the future subsistence of man and his offspring was to be obtained, was a toil which, in the fruitful state of the rich earth, replenished [illegible] with everything that could contribute to human

necessities or enjoyments, could be no difficult task; but rather an occupation for body and mind, which would serve to dispel gloomy thoughts of what by their obstinate self-will they had forfeited. The hardest portion of the judgment was, that it should afflict their posterity; and that God had decreed that they should no longer dwell in Paradise, lest, having eaten of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and acquired the wisdom of angels, man should also put forth his hand, and take of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever.

The night that followed the fall was a sleepless and perturbed one to Adam and his spouse. In the thick darkness they heard the hooting of the owl, and the roar of wild and savage animals, already prowling in search of prey; and the sky seemed disturbed with strange meteors, which ever and anon shot through the troubled air, and shed a garish light upon the tops of the hills and groves. Morning was never desired with such yearning, and never brought less joy when it came; for the rising sun shewed that a change was taking place upon all things. The keen winds had scattered about the beautiful foliage of the groves; flowers were drooping their delicate heads, nipped in the bud by the cold night air; and luscious fruit, with specks of decay upon its surface, fell to the ground unheeded. For the first time, the man and the woman felt lonely. Their waking was not greeted, as before, by the

[illegible] of the early-rising animals, which had been formed [illegible] their pleasure. The beasts fled from their presence, awed [illegible] the godlike form which man still retained; and he, in [illegible], dreaded the aspect of the tiger, and the fierce crea- [illegible] against whose strength of limb and savage appetite [illegible] unable to contend.

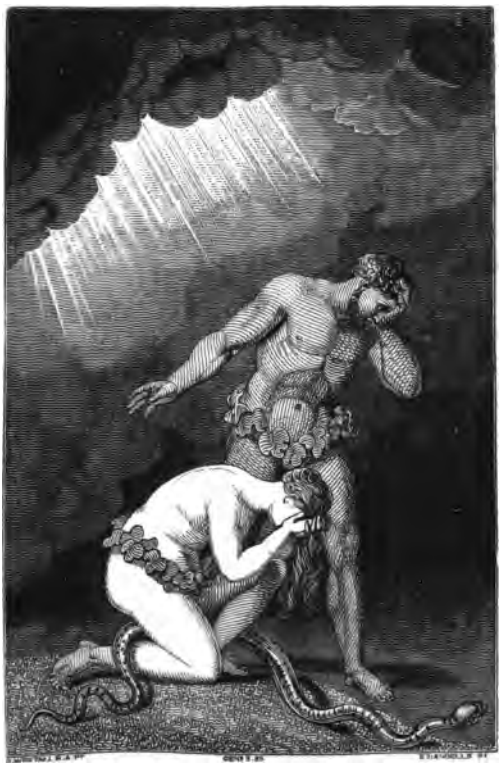
[illegible] alternations of heat and cold beginning to be felt immediately after the fall, the angels of the Lord prepared coats of [illegible] to clothe the man and his wife, so that they might not [illegible] effects of the piercing air, or of the saltry sun. They [illegible] them also what fruits and herbs were good for food, [illegible] to shun; and how to make the earth yield her [illegible] under the hand of labour. Then, having accomplished [illegible] of kindness, and promised from the Lord that [illegible] his spouse should not be left comfortless, they [illegible] prepared them both for their speedy departure from [illegible] of Eden, which they were never to be permitted [illegible].

[illegible] a heavy leave-taking when Adam and Eve, for the [illegible], wandered hand-in-hand through the bowers wherein [illegible] placed at their creation, and looked their last [illegible] brooks and streams, the groves and glades, and [illegible] and hillocks, where they had wandered in [illegible] happy innocence. The green grass seemed

caresses of the early-rising animals, which had been formed for their pleasure. The beasts fled from their presence, awed by the godlike form which man still retained; and he, in turn, dreaded the aspect of the tiger, and the fierce creatures against whose strength of limb and savage appetite he was unable to contend.

The alternations of heat and cold beginning to be felt immediately after the fall, the angels of the Lord prepared coats of skins to clothe the man and his wife, so that they might not feel the effects of the piercing air, or of the sultry sun. They taught them also what fruits and herbs were good for food, and what to shun; and how to make the earth yield her increase under the hand of labour. Then, having accomplished their work of kindness, and promised from the Lord that Adam and his spouse should not be left comfortless, they gently prepared them both for their speedy departure from the Garden of Eden, which they were never to be permitted to re-enter.

It was a heavy leave-taking when Adam and Eve, for the last time, wandered hand-in-hand through the bowers wherein they had been placed at their creation, and looked their last upon the brooks and streams, the groves and glades, and beautiful vales and hillocks, where they had wandered in their days of happy innocence. The green grass seemed



THE EXPULSION.

fresher through their tears than it had appeared at any former time; the flowers more fair and rich; the air more pure and balmy. It was their first and happiest home, and they were about to leave it for ever. The angel who was charged to lead them forth into the wilderness, gazed upon them with such pity as the blessed can feel for human woe. The fiery swords of cherubim, turning and blazing every way, went before them, towards the gates through which their course now lay.

"In either hand the hastening angel caught
Our lingering parents, and, to the eastern gate
Led them direct, and down the cliff as fast
To the subjected plain; then disappeared.
They, looking back, the eastern side beheld
Of Paradise, so late their happy seat,
Waved over by that flaming brand, the gate
With dreadful faces thronged, and fiery arms.
Some natural tears they dropped, but wiped them soon:
The world was all before them, where to choose
Their place of rest, and Providence their guide;
They, hand in hand, with wanderings steps and slow,
Through Eden took their solitary way!"

CAIN AND ABEL.

ADAM and Eve, being expelled from the Garden of Eden, were not left by the Almighty without guidance and comfort. Angels were sometimes their visitants; and in process of time two sons and two daughters were given them to lighten their sorrows, and assist them in making their lot, upon the still beautiful earth, a light and happy one. The names of their sons were Cain, the eldest born, and Abel, his brother.

There were then but six souls living in the vast world. How happy might they still have been! The earth scarcely needed tillage to produce its flowers, and fruit, and herbs, and grain. The flocks and cattle were abundant; the wild beasts kept afar from the habitations of the first family, subdued by that awe of man to whom the dominion over them had been given at the time of the creation; and the toil which had been denounced as man's punishment was so light as scarcely to be more than pastime. No sense of loneliness was felt; for besides that the visits of angels were frequent, the pleasures of society had never been known or understood.

The sisters of Cain and Abel were beautiful, affectionate beings, tenderly attached to their brothers and to each other,

and charming away every sorrow and affliction from their parents, who were not unfrequently sad to think of the blissful state they had forfeited, and the penalty thus imposed upon their children. It was long before they could summon sufficient resolution to tell the story of Paradise, and of their expulsion thence; and longer still, ere their tears ceased to flow at every mention or recollection of the happy innocence they had known before the serpent beguiled Eve into disobedience. Their sons and daughters comforted and reassured them; the daughters, by mingling tears with theirs, and by the tenderest caresses; the sons, by innumerable little acts of affection, testifying that their love was not diminished by the one fault of their kind parents.

The dispositions of the sons, however, as manhood was developed in them, appeared widely different from each other. Cain grew proud and wayward, yearning after the Paradise his parents had lost, and wicked enough to question the justice of the sentence by which he had been deprived of such a glorious heritage. Often, when he saw at eventide the fiery swords of the cherubim, which turned every way to keep the tree of life in Eden, would he repine at the fate to which he had been doomed, and curse the hour of his unhappy birth. It was with anguish and heaviness of heart his mother now began to look upon her offspring, dreading, as she did, accu-

mulated evil from the violent passions and ungovernable mind which he manifested. But Abel was meek and gentle, and bowed to the dispensation of his Maker without a word of accusation or despair. The promise which God had given to raise man from his fallen estate, was to him more than a recompense for the temporary griefs and ills to which he was subjected. He strove to solace his brother, and to wean his mind from self-inflicted miseries. He spoke kind words to his mother, and never dwelt upon the thought that it was her disobedience which had exiled them all from the garden of God.

Cain was a tiller of the earth. He went forth at dawn into a beautiful and fertile valley, generally accompanied by his eldest sister, who attached herself more peculiarly to him as a companion and protector; and while he trained the vine or the delicious wild fruits, which grew spontaneously in every grove and dingle, or planted herbs for food, his sister gathered and prepared the noon-day repast, spreading it upon the green sward, near some bubbling brook, that carried refreshing coolness through the scene. At night a hymn of prayer and thanksgiving arose in the cheerful home where they all assembled; in which, however, Cain, by degrees, came not to join. His sullenness was his own torment. He felt that reproaching his parents, even in thought, was a crime against

their kindness and affection; yet his pride restrained him from pursuing another and a better course.

Abel was a shepherd, keeping his flocks in the verdant plains, providing food and skins for the family, which last his sisters and mother wrought into clothing. Abel was beloved by his younger sister, who was ever by his side, the gayest, the most light-hearted, and most lovely creature then in existence. Abel, as he looked upwards towards the sun by day, and to the stars by night, thought only of the goodness of God in leaving the world so full of beauty, and with so much to gratify the wishes and supply the wants of his creatures after their disobedience. His reverence and love were unbounded; and if he had a sorrow, it was that the dark and desponding words of his brother Cain were calculated still further to incense the Almighty against mankind. Often would he remonstrate tenderly with him, and beseech him to pray for power of mind and courage to support his doom without repining: but in vain. Cain, in his solitary toil, had acquired a habit of brooding over bitter thoughts, which gathered strength from day to day, and at last engendered feelings which were like hate; and would have been such, but that there was no object on which such a deadly passion could be vented.

It was a beautiful summer evening. The music of the birds

as they were settling to slumber, the murmur of the wild bees, returning to their several homes laden with honey, the rustling of the leaves overhead, the tinkling of the stream as it flowed over a bed of pebbles, the lowing of distant kine, the odours of the flowers, which shed their sweetest perfume as the day declined, and the lovely hues of sunset, had disposed all things to peace, and to that melancholy joy which subdues and softens the sternest natures. Abel and Cain were returning from the scene of their several labours, to the groves wherein they had reared the rude but pleasant huts which formed their home. Abel, by mild and bland persuasion, had succeeded in obtaining a promise from his brother, that on the morrow he would erect an altar, and prepare an offering for the Lord. On that night Cain joined in the household-worship of his family, and all were happier than they had been for some time. It was a sweeter reunion of heart than the world had then known,

With the first burst of sunlight over the hills, Abel was at the door of his brother's hut, to awake and lead him forth to fulfil his promise. Cain was in deep but disturbed sleep, and marks of anger were upon his countenance. At the call of Abel he arose, but with no good-will to perform his promise of the previous evening. He had dreamed, he said, of Paradise; of the glorious destiny which had been prepared for

man, and from which his mother's crime and his father's folly had excluded them. "Why," he exclaimed, with bitterness, "when they had plucked the fruit of the forbidden tree, did they not also gather of the tree of life, and become immortal!"

"Cain, Cain!" replied his brother, "this is impious, and will provoke the wrath of our all bountiful Creator."

"Then leave me, Abel. I am not as thou art; nor my thoughts and feelings as thine. I cannot regard the curse, which I have never incurred, as a doom which I should bear unshrinkingly. My vision of the night has taught me that it is as unjust as unmerited."

"Oh, brother!" said Abel, "banish such evil thoughts: they will lead to greater ills, and bring down upon us all a judgment still harder to endure. Let us hasten to prepare the sacrifice together. I have already raised two altars on which to make our offerings. God rejects not the prayers of his creatures. Pray to him for peace of mind; and for his grace to keep us from renewed temptations."

"I have promised to follow thy example," said Cain, "but am hopeless to obtain that peace of which thou speakest, till I shall be even as the lambs that thou slayest to offer to the Most High. I have thought of death as a release from toil."

Abel was silent. The words of his brother inspired him

with strange and terrible feelings, which he hoped would be calmed by the act of worship in which they were about to join.

The altars, which were constructed of mingled turf and stones, were soon in readiness. Abel brought and slew a lamb, the firstling of his flocks, to offer as a burnt-offering. Cain gathered flowers, and herbs, and fruit, and placed upon his altar. When each had kindled a flame beneath his chosen sacrifice, Abel knelt and prayed fervently to the Almighty for blessing and protection to his parents, his brother, his sisters, and himself; and the flame of his offering ascended bright and straight towards the clear blue sky: but Cain stood erect beside his offering, leaning on the wooden spade with which he had obtained the roots, of which it was partly formed, and disdaining to utter a word. His scornful lip and angry eye seemed to indicate that he defied the wrath of his Maker, and that he was too proud to stoop to supplication, even to the throne of Mercy. Presently a rushing whirlwind arose, and the sacrifice of Cain, together with the altar on which it had been laid, were scattered upon the earth.

Cain muttered awful words against the element, which had destroyed his offering. But Abel enjoined him to pray, in order to avert Jehovah's anger.

CAIN AND ABEL.

"I will not pray," said Cain, whose face and forehead were now flushed with passion; "I will pray no more: the Almighty regards me not."

"Nay," entreated Abel, "thy haughtiness, my brother, has been the cause of this rejection. Pray here, at my altar; and if thy words be sincere in penitence, thou wilt still find favour."

"It is vain to urge me," replied Cain; "I will no longer be mocked and outraged. No longer toil, and sweat, and bend in lowly homage to Him who has doomed me to such servitude."

"Cain, this is blasphemy!"

"Do not anger me with reproaches," resumed the elder brother; "I am in no mood to bear these longer."

"I meant not to anger or reproach thee," resumed Abel; "but I beseech thee to think on the anger of the Lord, which thy obstinate pride has called down upon thy offering. Seek to avert it, then, by penitenee and atonement."

"I have said that I will pray no more."

"I will pray for thee."

"Nay, thou hadst better not: I seek no mediator."

"I cannot listen to thee, Cain, thy words are terrible!"

"My deeds shall be like them," said the now enfuriated Cain; and grasping the spade which he held in his hand, he

approached the altar of Abel to scatter that also upon the ground, as his own had been scattered. Abel, who saw him, and guessed his intention, rushed towards him, and withheld him from his purpose; but this, by increasiug his brother's anger, made him more desperate and determined. After several ineffectual struggles to free himself from the arms of his brother, in a moment of maddened rage he struck Abel upon the forehead with the implement with which he had designed to insult the altar; and, reeling with the savage blow, his brother fell upon the green earth, which was soon stained with a pool of blood—the first that had gushed from human veins.

The revulsion of Cain's feelings was instantaneous: horror and remorse took possession of his breast, and anger fled. The strong passions which had led to the dreadful deed, now made his regret the more poignant. Abel, stunned and bleeding, lay at his feet. "My brother," he faintly said, as he recovered from the first stupor, "come near me. I feel that the death we have all dreaded is about to make me its first victim; that in a few moments I shall have ceased to live."

"Oh, no, my brother; it was but a momentary fit of anger, and has passed now. Thou wilt, thou must revive."

"Nay, Cain; faintness and darkness are stealing over me. Be kind to my mother, my sisters; tell them I have forgiven

thee: with prayer God will forgive thee too. My father, thou hast now but one son. My sister—"

Abel breathed a heavy, stifled sigh, and became silent; and though Cain knelt over and entreated him to speak, to look once more upon him, he could obtain neither word nor token. He rose from the earth, and gazed around in agony. He felt that he had brought death in its most terrible form into the world; that he was a murderer; the slayer of his own, his only brother. He thought of his father's sorrow, of his mother's anguish, of the tears of his innocent and tender sisters; and when his eyes lighted upon the lifeless form before him, and the clotted blood upon his brother's brow, he felt that the curse had been deserved; and feared that it would light on him with tenfold vengeance.

Mid-day came, and still Cain had stirred not from beside the cold and stiffening body of his victim. A stupor had overcome all his faculties. He was afraid to remain where he was, yet dared not leave the spot. At length his sister—his youngest sister, the bride of Abel, sought her brothers. She had prepared their noon-tide meal. She could not at first comprehend what she saw; and when she at last knew that her brother Abel was dead, she suspected not that he had been slain by him who should have been his protector. Adam, Eve, their eldest daughter, gathered round the spot,

The truth soon flashed upon the father's mind. The fatal spade was stained with marks of blood; and Cain's bewildered manner brought conviction that the dreadful deed was his. This was, to all, the bitterest fruit the tree of knowledge had yet produced. Adam bore away the corpse of his dead son; and Eve would have cursed her first-born, but for the interposition of an angel, who warned her that this would add another to the list of human crimes; vengeance belonging to the Lord alone. His soothing voice was heeded; and, save the elder sister, who, notwithstanding his guilt, craved to remain with her brother, Cain was left alone with the angel.

Where is thy brother Abel?" asked the angel, when the family had departed.

Cain, abashed, and apprehending a fresh and heavy denunciation, if he acknowledged his crime, sought to evade the enquiry, and replied, "I know not. Am I my brother's keeper?"

The angel answered, "What hast thou done? The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto the Lord from the ground. Now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand. When thou tillest the ground it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength. A fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth."

Cain, stricken with the depth of his remorse and the heaviness of the curse now pronounced upon him, replied, "My punishment is greater than I can bear. Behold, the Lord hath driven me out this day from the face of the earth; and from His face shall I be hid: and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth; and it shall come to pass, that when the earth is peopled, whosoever findeth me shall slay me."

Cain looked upon his sister, as though a thought might be nurtured in her bosom of future injury to him. But the angel quickly dissipated his fears, by saying, "Whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold."

The angel, therefore, before he sent him forth to seek a new home, afar from the scenes of his infancy and the huts of his father and his slain brother, set a mark upon Cain, that it might be known to all that the Lord reserved the punishment of his offence to himself. And when the beloved sister of Cain had taken a tender leave of her father and mother, and her brother Abel's widowed bride, she accompanied her now wandering husband in his lonely journey into a region eastward of Eden, more desolate than that they had left; but suiting better, perhaps, on that account, with the gloom of his recollections. From that day forth he never saw again the kindred from whom he had been banished. Cain, the first murderer, was a wretched wanderer.

THE DELUGE.

The world was rapidly peopled by the children and descendants of Adam and Eve. Many generations had arisen upon the earth, before the father of mankind sunk into the grave to which his crime in Eden had subjected him. The Lord did not at once shorten the life of man to the brief space to which it was afterwards limited. Adam lived nine hundred and thirty years: a long period as compared with the threescore and ten years, which, in the days of the Psalmist David, constituted the extent of vigorous human life; but how brief, and how full of care, anxiety, and evil, when we reflect on the immortality of happiness originally promised by the Almighty as the reward of obedience!

The family of Cain, with the knowledge of the crime of that patriarch, retained much of the proud and scornful spirit of their forefather; and by degrees estranged themselves from the worship of God, and followed the bent of their vicious inclinations, regardless of the anger of the Lord, which was sometimes visibly manifested against them in the miseries inflicted upon themselves and their offspring, by sickness and

premature death. The family of Seth, the son who had been given to Adam in place of the murdered Abel, were at first more righteous than the progeny of Cain, calling upon the name of the Lord, and conducting themselves in the way which they conceived to be most agreeable to Him. But in course of time they also degenerated, following the example of the tribe of Cain, and committing great wickedness in the sight of God.

One family alone remained faithful servants of the Most High, consisting of Noah, a man of the tribe of Seth, and his three sons and their wives. And the Lord was angry at the wickedness of his creatures, and repented that he had made man to cumber the fair earth, and render it hateful through the evil that was constantly committed. Dissension, strife, fraud, bloodshed, blasphemy, every vice and crime that could enter into the hearts of evil-minded persons, were perpetrated without fear or reproach. Every imagination of man was a sin against the majesty, mercy, and justice of his Maker.

When the Lord beheld that there was no penitence nor remorse remaining in his creatures, and that nothing but a great judgment could cleanse the earth from its pollution, he resolved to destroy all living beings that he had made, that so the generations of the world might be renewed after

terrible atonement. Noah and his family alone found favour with the offended Deity; for Noah was a just and devout man, and he and his household walked in the way of the Lord. And an angel sent from God warned Noah, and said, "The end of all flesh is come before Jehovah, for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, the Almighty will destroy them with the earth."

This terrible denunciation of Divine displeasure was not made to one of callous heart. The good are always kind and gentle, feeling for the woes and sufferings of others, notwithstanding their knowledge that misery is often self-inflicted, and more frequently still, deserved. Noah prayed and entreated the Lord that he would yet spare the beings of his hands; and in order that he might obtain a more effective hearing, he admonished the wrong-doers among whom he dwelt, that though God was merciful and long-suffering, yet that his patience would not endure for ever. But the hearts of his hearers were hardened, and insult and mockery were returned for the kindness of the good man, who sought to save them from the dreadful fate which had been decreed. Injurious aspersions, ribaldry, scoffing, and jests were multiplied against Noah, and against his sons and daughters; and not content with this, the vain and ignorant people, who had set themselves in array against the Lord, conspired

together to slay him who had dared to remind them of their manifold transgressions. Even the brothers and sisters of Noah reviled him, and asked by what authority he had assumed the right of censuring the conduct of those older, wiser, and better than himself. It was in vain, therefore, that he besought their patient hearing; in vain that he urged them to repent and flee from the approaching storm. Yet still in prayer did he approach the throne of Mercy, to implore pardon and pity for his fallen race.

The corruption of mankind, meanwhile, increased daily; and when crime and profligacy had attained their height, the Lord commanded Noah that he should build an ark, of certain dimensions and proportions, to contain his own household, and of every living thing of all flesh, two of every sort, to replenish the earth after it should be destroyed. "For, behold," said the Almighty, "I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; and everything that is in the earth shall die." And Noah, that he might yield implicit obedience to the word of the Lord, retired from the immediate haunts of those among whom his life had hitherto been passed; for he desired not to see the destruction of those who, despite their crimes, were still dear to him by the ties of kindred, and early and long affection.

May we not picture to ourselves the deep, yet silent sorrow, the throng of recollections, the yearnings of love, which though scorned had not been all crushed, with which he turned upon the hill-side to gaze for the last time upon the shingle-covered huts of his native valley. The bright sun still smiling as in happier days, when wickedness had not arisen in the earth; the waters gliding as smoothly through long level lawns of the purest and freshest green grass, gemmed with the red tipped daisy, the deep yellow cowslip, and the graceful hyacinth. The shouts that were wafted onward by the gentle zephyr, were the sounds of remembered voices, of his kindred and those whom he had daily seen from his infancy; even the ribald song and the profane jibe came from lips that nature had endeared to him: and he was looking upon that spot for the last time, or if again he should behold it, how changed would be its aspect; how cold and desolate the ruined hearths on which the mid-day fires then blazed.

It was in a quiet retreat at the foot of a mountain, where a neighbouring forest afforded abundance of wood, and of all things necessary both for food and for use, that Noah began to build the ark according to the revelation which the Lord had made. Nearly a hundred years did he and his family labour to complete the work which had been com-

manded them; and in all that time they were encouraged and comforted by heavenly visitants, who joined in their songs of thanksgiving and praise at morn, at noon, and eve. Noah, though he grieved for the sins of mankind, and sometimes wept to think of the punishment which they had incurred, no longer besought that the earth might be saved. It would, he thought, have seemed like breathing a reproach against the justice of the Lord.

Long before the ark was completed, innumerable animals, reptiles, insects, and birds of every kind, male and female, all without taint or blemish, had collected in the forests and glades in the vicinity of which the ark was being constructed. The produce of the earth, meanwhile, seemed to spring forth spontaneously; never had seed yielded such abundant harvests; never had so little labour been needed to till the ground, or to preserve its fruits of increase. And when the ark was finished, and its seams and timbers pitched and strengthened, the Lord said unto Noah, "Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation. Of every clean beast thou shalt take to thee by sevens, the male and the female; and of beasts that are not clean by two, the male and his female. Of fowls also of the air by sevens, the male and the female; to keep seed alive upon the face of all the earth. For yet

seven days, and I will cause it to rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights; and every living substance that I have made will I destroy from off the face of the earth."

And Noah and his sons went forth to the field and the forest without dread, and drove into the ark, according to the commandment of God, the living creatures, which were not to be destroyed in the general wreck. Two and two went they into the ark, the male and female; clean and unclean; beasts of the earth and fowls of the air, cattle and creeping things, together with food for all the kinds that Jehovah had said should be saved alive in the day of the great flood.

It was in the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, that the doors were closed by an angel upon the eight persons selected by the Lord for salvation, and upon the other inmates of the ark. The ark itself rested upon the mountain whereon it had been built. In the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened. The sea-tide flowed continuously without ebb for a whole day, and the rain ceased not. The rivers overflowed their banks, the hill torrents were swoln into wild cataracts: the lowland fields and pastures, which but a day before smiled with all the mellow joyousness of Autumn, were soaked and desolate. The first night passed unheeded. The morn arose

THE DELUGE.

with grey and leaden sky: the rain drops had become larger and fell in closer array. The valleys were already flooded. And now arose fierce whirlwinds, rending trees and shattering the habitations of man; with loud hoarse thunder, which seemed cracking the firmament, and lurid lightning, darting with the rapidity of a serpent's sting, and seeming to be the only light that could penetrate the thickened atmosphere.

Sudden terror fell upon all men. It seemed like the approach of universal dissolution. Fear gave them desperate energy. As the floods increased, they removed from place to place in search of dry ground; till finding none in the vales and plains, they betook them to the hills, with feverish hopes and apprehensions. There was no abatement of the storm for a moment. Howling winds, incessant rain, booming thunder, and the fearful hiss of the blue lightning made day hideous, and gave to night the appearance of a general conflagration.

Now prayers were offered up upon the hills and rocks mingled with fearful imprecations—blasphemous oaths with the wailings of despair. Knees, that never before bowed to the throne of the Creator, were bent in solemn reverence and adjuration to the Mighty Spirit whose wrath had been kindled against a guilty world. The mother clasped her infant to her bosom, but vainly strove to shelter it from the drenching

and pitiless elements. Lovers forgot their timidity, and fled to each other's arms for succour and solace. All enmities were now forgotten. The common calamity had dissipated every thought but such as tended to self-preservation. Even the animals which had shunned the presence of man, crowded to the same haunts for shelter. The gaunt tiger forgot his savage nature in the fear with which he was stricken: the lion crouched beside the unharmed antelope. All creatures, however opposite in their habits and dispositions, sought the summits of the high hills and huddled together; and all were filled with the same intense awe and despair.

Upward and upward rose the waters hour after hour. There was no cessation, no pause—nothing to impart a ray of hope to those who were now conscious of their coming doom. Already numbers had perished in the waters, or among the crowds, trampled down by the huge animals which pressed upon the track of man. Hunger began to mingle with other feelings, and human affections to grow cold and wither. Individual clinging to life, and the sense that all but self was an encumbrance, began to grow universal. Children, as they climbed from ridge to ridge among rocky mountains, forsook their aged parents, fathers and mothers their offspring—the babe at the breast was the last to be relinquished, and when the mother had lost her youngest born she also soon dropped,

and died. The agony and horror of the time were fearful, and every moment it grew more and more unendurable. Some, no longer able to abide the terrors which encompassed them, rushed into the waters beneath and perished by their own act.

After a few days, the ark was upraised from its place and floated upon the waters, and Noah and his family knew that the plains and many of the hills were covered with the flood; and that the world must have sustained much suffering and woe. Although the roar of the elements without was terrific, the light of Heaven was upon the ark, and peace and security were within it. The power and goodness of God, in thus preventing the total destruction of all that was on the earth, was above estimate or comprehension.

For forty days the rain prevailed upon the earth; and the waters rose above the tops of the highest mountains; and mankind, and all flesh, of fowl, of cattle, and of beast, and of every creeping thing, were engulphed in a watery grave. None but the inmates of the ark of God were saved alive. Death had dominion over all that had dwelt upon the dry land. The wicked had ceased from troubling, and the weary were at rest. Old man and maiden, the grey-haired widow and her young and manly son, the infant and his sire, had all

perished. The sun rose, after forty days, upon a vast and shoreless ocean. The ark now rode in the calm clear sunshine upon the face of the waters, which shone like a glassy mirror over the depopulated world.

And Noah, when he saw that the rain had ceased, opened a window of the ark, and sent forth a raven to see if it should find resting-place; but it returned at even-tide, weary and hungry, and so continued to go and return from day to day. And after seven days he sent forth a dove, to see if the waters were abated. But she, like the raven, could find no resting-place among the waters, and returned to the ark for shelter and food. Seven other days elapsed, and Noah again sent forth the dove; which again returned in the evening, and was taken into the ark; but, lo, on this occasion, she had in her mouth an olive leaf, which she had plucked from its branch. So Noah knew that the waters were abated. Who shall describe the joy which the sight of this simple leaf conveyed to the bosoms of the only living family in the great world! Well might the olive be thenceforward an emblem of peace, and hope, and happiness! Still onward and onward floated the huge ark over the abyss. The mountain tops began gradually to appear; and at the end of a third seven days, when the gentle dove was sent forth again, it returned no

THE ASSUAGING OF THE WATERS.

more. There was dry land, whereon she could find rest and food. Still, however, the ark rode, without finding a secure shore, upon the waters.

A hundred and fifty days had passed from the commencement of the flood ere the ark rested among the mountains of Ararat; and then, when Noah removed the covering of the ark, to look out upon the earth, the face of the ground was dry. On the same day an angel of the Lord descended, and, entering the ark, said unto Noah, "Go forth of the ark, thou and thy wife, and thy sons and thy sons' wives with thee, and bring forth with thee every living thing, that they may breed abundantly, and be fruitful and multiply upon the earth."

And Noah and his family went forth and descended to the green plain. The cattle also, and the birds, and beasts, and creeping things, which had been saved with them in the ark, quitted their place of refuge. It was still a beautiful world which they were reserved to replenish; but how changed from its former state! Rivers were diverted from their ancient channels; rocks had been heaved from their beds; mountains dissolved into ooze and washed into the valleys; and the ocean had formed for itself new shores and boundaries. The garden of Eden, with the flaming sword and the cherubim, the tree of life and the tree of knowledge, had been

swept away by the universal deluge, and their place upon the earth has never since been known.

Then Noah and his sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, built an altar near the spot where the ark had rested; and they and their wives offered a sacrifice to the Almighty, with prayer and thanksgiving, for his protection and love. The human family of eight persons, sole inhabitants of the world, assembled upon the shore of the great deep to acknowledge the mercy of Him who had singled them for preservation when in his anger he destroyed all else. And Jehovah beheld the gratitude of his servants, and was pleased with their devotion, and heard their prayer; and He said, "I will not curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more everything living, as I have done. While the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease."

And in order that Noah might know that his sacrifice was accepted, the Lord set a bright bow in the clouds, formed of divers brilliant colours, blended into one gorgeous arch of majestic loveliness; the beautiful and spiritual rainbow, which we still see as the companion of a sunny shower. And the voice of the Lord was heard from the bow, saying, "I, behold I, establish my covenant with you, and with your seed

NOAH'S FIRST SACRIFICE.

after you, and with every living creature that is with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth, from all that go out of the ark to every beast of the earth. No more shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth."

And Noah and his family prostrated themselves and did homage when they heard the words of the Almighty. And God said, "This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you, and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations; I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth. And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud: and I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh. And the bow shall be in the cloud and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth."

To this promise of peace Noah could make no answer, for his heart was filled with the abundant grace and kindness of God. But Jehovah, who can read what passes in the heart and mind of man, knew that his servant whom he had saved was rendering truer and worthier homage for his beneficence

than mere lip-service. So the Lord blessed Noah, and his sons, and their wives, and said unto them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth. And to Noah and his family the earth was given for a heritage. The animals which had been preserved with them in the ark, the birds, the fishes, the fruit, and the green herbs, were committed to their hands for food, for clothing, and for pleasure. And God gave solemn commandments to Noah and his children, concerning the sins which had excited his anger against the generations which had been destoyed. "Surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man. Who so sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man."

THE DISPERSION OF MANKIND.

NOTWITHSTANDING the dreadful visitation which the family of Noah had witnessed, the generation that had seen the flood had not passed away before man began again to tempt the anger of the Lord by his perverseness. The sons of Ham, especially, were disobedient, and regardless of the injunctions of the patriarch their sire, and of the living warning afforded by his miraculous preservation.

Nimrod, the grandson of Ham, was a man of proud, unyielding spirit, of great personal strength and courage, and disposed to use the powers of his mind and body to make instruments of his brethren for the accomplishment of his own will, and the gratification of his desires. Fluent of speech and fertile in expedients, Nimrod led forth a colony of his kinsmen towards the land of Assyria; and being too restless of mind to settle to the life of industry which had been prescribed to man as the honest means of existence, he sought to sustain himself and his followers by the chace, a pursuit of which the adventurous wildness charmed him, both as

it afforded intense excitement for the mind, and required no steady aim or deliberate plan of action.

The loud halloo of the hunter, the deep bay of the gaunt and well trained hound, the bound of the swift and timid antelope, of the wild ox, or the fierce beast of prey, often awakened the echoes of the vast forests and jungles, and the rocky glens, that skirted the Euphrates, or the pleasant streams that poured their clear waters into that magnificent river. At morn, at noon, arose the cry of pursuit, and at eve the festive song of successful sportsmen. Day followed day in the same round of self-imposed toil and inebriating pleasure. The sabbath was at first but half observed, then neglected, and at last scoffed at. Even the worship of the Almighty was made to depend upon the leisure which his creatures could afford for devotion; or, in other words, was regarded as a task which might be omitted when any other occupation could be found, and resorted to only in moments of vacancy: as though the Lord could be pleased with homage which was but a refuge from utter idleness.

The wandering life of the Assyrian hunters was full of danger as well as of enterprise. The chace led among caverns and precipices; through ravines, where silent and dangerous gulfs lay concealed beneath faithless weeds and briars; over cliffs, where frightful chasms lay yawning beneath, into which

an unsteady footstep would have plunged all who approached. Through stream and morass, thicket and glade, over mountain and moor, roamed the reckless band of the daring Nimrod, the "mighty hunter before the Lord." Fainter and fainter, from month to month, became the fear and worship of God. The sun, the moon, and the stars, by which the hunters guided their course through the pathless wilderness, by day and night, came in process of time to be regarded as symbols of the Divinity, and to receive a portion of the adoration which ought to be paid to God alone. Fires were lighted upon the high hills to Baal, the sun; to Astoreth, the moon, and to the lesser lights of Heaven: and again idolatry was in the world.

Still the hunters, like the roving tribes of wild Indians at the present day, were wanderers, having no home, but the spot that for the time being was most convenient for the chace, for fishing, or for cultivating the small patches of corn or vegetables that served to flavour their repasts. The bows and arrows, the lines, and nets, and snares that were required for their avocations, were wrought in the tents of the tribe, by the women whom they had associated with them in the wild life which they led, or the aged or maimed of their men. It soon occurred to Nimrod that this might be turned to advantage, in creating a permanent dominion over

fellow men; and the founding of a power which should not pass away with himself, but be perpetuated to his race, without subjecting his children to the toil of always being foremost in braving danger and death, and in teaching their followers to shun the ills themselves encountered. The maintenance of sovereignty at such a cost were worthless. The mighty hunter therefore conceived a plan to subject the lawless spirits that surrounded him more effectually, and at an infinitely less sacrifice of personal ease.

In the beautiful land of Shinar, where the fertile earth teemed with all that was necessary to sustain life or be pleasant to the senses, in a wide plain, stretching along the banks of the Euphrates, Nimrod for the first time substituted a hut for his hunter's tent, and traced the plan of a city, to serve as a fixed residence for the women and craftsmen to whom the increased number of his followers now gave constant employment. There were slime-pits in the pastures near the river; and as the builders proceeded in erecting the city, it was found that the slime, when hardened by the sun, but more especially when baked by fire, was equal, or nearly so, in strength and substance, to stone; and being at hand and easily moulded into form, bricks thus made began to be used, instead of the wood and turf of which previous towns and cities had been constructed. The discovery of this new material gave

an increased zest to the work itself; and the city proceeded with a celerity, and to an extent which had not been contemplated when the design for its erection was originally divulged. At first it had been regarded by the huntsmen as a sign of effeminacy that a man should seek to dwell within sheltering walls; but the goodly buildings of the city of Nimrod, the halls and palaces which arose like carved rocks from the plain of Shinar, seemed to have a seductive influence for all; and it became a matter of debate who should follow the chace and till the earth, to procure food for the labourers. Strife, dissension, and bloodshed sometimes occurred because of the city—each of the huntsmen claiming such of the buildings as he had a mind to; notwithstanding, that at first the houses were only designed to shelter the women and those whose health or occupations required a fixed abode.

Nimrod, the hunter before the Lord, assumed the office of judge and arbiter of the differences between his followers. This was the beginning of his kingdom: of a power over the minds of those whose suffrages he had first gained by his superior strength and skill in the exercises and pursuits in which all were alike engaged. The eloquence and reasoning of the chief, seldom failed to carry conviction to at least the majority of those who heard his decisions: and while he thus

gave satisfaction, none thought to question the right by which he had asserted his supremacy.

Meanwhile, the city grew, and became populous. Craftsmen of all kinds, in the various professions then known, found abundant occupation. Shops for the exchange of such necessaries, and even luxuries, as could be procured were established. Temples were erected for the heathen worship, which had almost entirely superseded that of the true God. Pomp and magnificence, with their train of voluptuous and enervating pleasures arose; and the empire of Nimrod was established. There is nothing which bows one man to the will of another so much as the depravity which springs from too great self-indulgence. This warps our judgment, and renders us unfit to decide on the nature or tendency of the actions of our neighbours, depriving us, at the same time, of the energy necessary to assert our own independence, when its integrity is threatened, either indirectly or by violence.

The city of Nimrod became the resort of strangers from the distant East, whence the hunters of Assyria had at first departed. It was the wonder of all the peopled earth, for its construction and the splendour and riches which were accumulated within its walls. Its inhabitants, by their pride and power, and the arrogance which they displayed at all

times and towards all persons, spread universal terror around them. And the people of this great city, when they saw the slavish submission of their neighbours, became exalted in their own conceit, and thought that they were little less than gods. A thought, a traditionary remembrance sometimes obtruded to humiliate them—that there was a Deity still greater than their Baal, and that He in his wrath had once destroyed the earth and its inhabitants. When the storm burst, as it sometimes would, above the embattled turrets of the Assyrian capital, they felt that Jehovah was the great God; but forgetting that He, the Creator, knew the thoughts of men's hearts as well as their actions, they said one to another, "Go to, let us build us a city, and a tower whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth."

And Nimrod, the chief of the city, laid the foundation of a tower close by the temple of Baal, and near his own palace. The design was to avoid the wrath of the Almighty, should he again be tempted to deluge the earth; for the covenant of the Lord, made with Noah when he came forth from the ark, that "the waters should no more become a flood to destroy all flesh," had been utterly forgotten, notwithstanding the frequent appearance of the sublime bow, which God had set in the clouds, as a sign of His remembered promise to man.

And the builders of the tower prospered in their work. They made huge kilns without the gates of the city to burn the brick required for the vast labour which they had undertaken. Night and day they worked at the massy citadel, which was to exalt man's power above his Maker's, and set the anger of God at nought; and as, tier above tier, the fabric ascended to the clouds, the exultation of the people arose, and their terror of Divine vengeance diminished.

A long and toilsome task it was to rear the huge pile. As the tower increased in height, it became almost a day's journey to reach the point where the labourers wrought; and still not half the work was completed. The rapidity with which the building proceeded, however, was almost inconceivable, considering the number of persons necessary to conduct it, the well-ordered division of labour required, the extreme difficulty of the ascent, which was by a winding road, built with and being a portion of the tower, and forming an inclined plane from the summit to the base, and the thin atmosphere which as they mounted from the earth was found to envelope the workmen. Weeks, months, years passed, and still early and late the builders and artificers were seen in countless throngs, steadily pursuing their vocation in the construction of the gigantic fabric. Already was the top of the building enveloped in clouds, whence the workmen could see

THE TOWER OF BABEL.

the evening lightnings playing in mid air beneath them, and storms gather and burst at their feet. It was an awful thing to gaze from the uppermost scaffoldings downward to the earth and the waters, and to see the sun rise and set in the distant horizon. The followers of Nimrod, however, were undaunted, and endued with a spirit of perseverance, which seemed indomitable and superhuman.

At length the Almighty, having observed the vain toil of the self-willed creatures whom He had made, came down accompanied with his angels unseen towards the earth. And the Lord said, "Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech."

So the Lord brought a storm upon the earth, with thick clouds and darkness, and thunder and rain. The builders at the great tower ceased their work, and the labourers at the kilns and furnaces, where the bricks were burned, were affrighted and fled. The crackling thunder rocked the city, with its temple and palaces, and the lightnings streamed around turret and pinnacle, and lighted the streets and walls with a glare which looked like that of a general conflagration. All night the storm raved with a violence that seemed to

threaten the dissolution of the world. The roofs of the temple of Baal were rent, and the battlements fell from the palace of the hunter king. The great tower itself shook like a cedar, and the scaffolding around its summit was loosened and precipitated to the ground with a crash which seemed to affect the foundations of the whole city. Many buildings were stricken with lightning and overwhelmed in ruin; and in the intervals of the storm might be heard wailings of anguish and fear, and the blaspheming cries of terror and despair.

When morning dawned upon the city, and the thick clouds rolled slowly away, the inhabitants came forth into the streets and public places, with trembling steps and ghastly visages, to learn what mischief had been wrought by the dreadful visitation of the preceding night. But lo! when they were assembled, they could not understand each other's speech. The Lord had confounded their language, so that none knew what his neighbour said. Their converse was a jargon, utterly confused and unintelligible; yet each was unconscious of change within himself, and believed that he was mocked by the person whom he addressed. Nimrod, the mighty hunter, rode forth among the tumultuous crowd; but his commands were no longer heeded, his behests no longer understood. The confusion, the want of intelligence became terrible.

Rage, awe, horror, succeeded to the night of storm and destruction. The builders went no more to the great tower; the ruined halls and temples lay where they had fallen, unrepaired and uncared for. Each was occupied by his own thoughts and feelings, and each feared that some still heavier calamity might ensue.

By degrees, renewed confidence and a better understanding were established. It was found that the language of some of the populace still retained considerable resemblance to that of others, and that certain signs and symbols might be made to perform the office of speech. Men thus began to congregate according to their language; and to form nations and races; spreading themselves abroad upon the face of the earth, and appropriating cities and towns to themselves according to the speech which they severally used. And Nimrod the hunter, who, for his personal prowess, was regarded as something more than an ordinary man, still maintained his dominion over the whole people, who, having forsaken God, had no trust but in the salvation of man. And the sway of the hunter monarch was acknowledged before his death by the city of Babel, which was that of the great tower, and by the cities of Erech and Accad, and Calneh in the land of Shinar, and of Nineveh, and Rehoboth, and Calah, and Resen.

The city of Nimrod was called Babel, because of the

confusion; and hence arose the dispersion of the descendants of Noah, by whom in course of time the whole earth was peopled. And this Babel was the same which was subsequently called Babylon, of which the prophet Isaiah many ages afterwards said, "Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldee's excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in, from generation to generation: neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall the shepherds make their fold there. But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures; and owls shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there. And the wild beasts of the islands shall cry in their desolate houses, and dragons in their pleasant palaces;"—a prophecy, the fulfilment of which is one of the most remarkable evidences of the truth of the word of God.

ABRAHAM AND LOT.

MANY years after the dispersion of mankind, when the descendants of the sons of Noah had become generally corrupt and wicked, it pleased the Lord to preserve one family from the otherwise universal taint of idolatry and crime. The children of Terah, of the tribe of Eber, of the race of Shem, still worshipped the God of Noah and of Adam; but, being surrounded by the Chaldeans, who were addicted to the vices introduced by Nimrod and his followers, there was great danger lest they also should fall into the commission of sin, and desert the way of the Lord. So in a vision of the night, the Lord called unto Abram the son of Terah: "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee; and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed."

At this time Abram was seventy-five years old, and he

was married to Sarai, a virtuous and believing woman of his own tribe; and they two dwelt with Lot the son of Haran, Abram's brother, who had died in the land of his nativity. As the Lord had commanded, so did Abram. He took his wife and his brother's son, and all their substance, and went forth to journey to the land of Canaan, since called Syria or Palestine, which was that promised by God as a possession to Abram and his seed. Now Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver and gold, and Lot also had flocks, and herds, and tents; so rich were both indeed that the land was not able to bear them dwelling together; the pasturage and water for the cattle, and food for the herdsmen and attendants, were insufficient; until in the end there arose strife between the followers of Abram and those of Lot; when Abram said unto Lot: "Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdsmen and thine; for we are brethren. Is not the whole land before thee? Separate thyself, I pray thee, from me. If thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left." And Lot lifted up his eyes and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered, even as the garden of the Lord. So Lot chose the plain of Jordan, and journeyed eastward; and Abram continued to dwell in the land of Canaan.

The example of Nimrod the mighty hunter had long been established as a precedent among the races which had sprung from or held intercouse with the impious builders of the tower of Babel. Kings had arisen in the cities of the plain; and wars had become common among mankind. Small regard was left for the denunciation of the Lord, that "whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." The whole generation had given itself up to folly, licentiousness, and the grossest iniquity.

When Lot separated himself from Abram, he went to dwell in Sodom, of which Bera was then king, who with other kings had been subdued by Chedorlaomer, king of Elam, and had served and paid tribute to that prince twelve years. In the thirteenth year the subjected kings revolted, and there arose a fierce war between the kings of Shinar, Ellasar, and Elam, and Tidal king of nations on the one side, and the kings of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim, and Bela on the other, whose armies joined battle in the vale of Siddim upon the coast of the salt sea: a place full of slime-pits and acclivities, which both in the battle and the fight wrought as much destruction as the sword of the enemy. And the servants of the five kings were overthrown by the troops of the four; and those who escaped from the conflict fled into the valley, and the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah were

overtaken and slain, while those who escaped fled to the mountains. The victors returning in triumph plundered the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah of all the goods, wealth, and provisions of the inhabitants, and they took many of the people and carried them away captive, with design to make them slaves. Among others they took Lot, the nephew of Abram, and all his property.

Intelligence of these events was speedily carried, by a fugitive who had escaped from the scene of outrage, to Abram, who dwelt in the plain of Mamre, and who had the most friendly relations with Eshcol the Amorite, and his brother Mamre, and with Aner, all chiefs of neighbouring tribes. At the request of Abram, these warlike leaders assembled and armed their dependants and friends; and Abram also armed his trained servants, of whom there were three hundred and eighteen, born in his own house. And these confederate bands pursued Chedorlaomer and his companions, and overtook them by night, before they were aware that an enemy had come against them; and after a furious engagement, the four kings were defeated and fled; and Abram and his men pursued them unto Hobah, a place near to the city of Damascus. The victory was complete in all things. Not only was Lot rescued from his captors, but all the men and women, and the spoil which had been taken from the pillaged cities, were recovered.

THE RESCUE OF LOT.

It was a lovely autumnal night. The placid moon gladdened the Syrian glens, whose groves of palm and sycamore, reposing in soft and silent light, extended their lengthened shadows far over the lake of Sodom, contrasting solemnly with the wild rout and uproar of which they were unconscious witnesses. The green sod in these pathless valleys, previously untrodden by any but the herdsman and his charge, seemed, when the fray was over, to have assumed a tint of darker green, as if it loathed the violence to which it had been subjected. The sward was stained with the blood of men, horses, and camels; the mangled bodies of the dead and dying strewed the flower-sprinkled ground; and the cries and shouts of pain, of rage, and exultation made the usually noiseless night hideous.

It was pleasant, nevertheless, to behold the meeting of those who had been separated, though but for so short a space: it seemed like restoration from the grave. Wives, children, parents, friends, and lovers, torn suddenly from home, to become captive slaves in a strange country—and then as suddenly, in the midst of despair, brought back to hope and happiness. We know not how dear to us are the ties of home and kindred, how deep rooted are our affections and sympathies, until we have experienced the bitterness of

bereavement! We know not the full sweetness of enjoyment, until we have tasted of the cup of affliction!

Abram after the defeat of the kings returned towards Sodom, and the new king of that city went forth to meet him in a valley called the king's dale, whither also Melchizedek, king of Salem, a priest of Jehovah, went to welcome and to bless him. And Melchizedek took with him bread and wine, which he distributed among the victors and those who had been wrested from the spoilers' hands; and he blessed Abram, saying, "Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: and blessed be the most high God, who hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand." There was great rejoicing on all sides, and excess of pleasure opened the hearts of all, insomuch that Abram gave tithes of all that he had to Melchizedek; and the king of Sodom offered to Abram and his companions, all the goods and property that he had rescued from Chedorlaomer, desiring only that the people who had been carried away should be restored. But Abram said, "I have lift up mine hand unto the Lord, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth, that I will not take from a thread even to a shoe-latchet, and that I will not take anything that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich; save only that which the young men have eaten, and the

portion of the men which went with me, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them take their portion." And Abram departed towards the plains of Mamre, and Lot returned to the city of Sodom.

When Abram was ninety and nine years old, the Lord appeared to him, and said, "I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect. And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly, and thou shalt be a father of many nations. Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham. And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God. And as for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall her name be. And I will bless her, and give thee a son also of her; yea, I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of people shall be of her!"

In the same year in which this promise was made to Abraham, and while he yet abode in the plain of Mamre, as he sat in the door of his tent in the heat of the day, three men appeared to him, with the brightness of beatitude around them, and a grace and joy and majesty which told that they were celestial visitants. And Abraham ran to meet

them from the tent door, and bowing himself toward the ground said, "My Lord, if now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant." Then he hastened into the tent, and made ready an entertainment and water to wash their feet, and stood by them under the tree while they did eat. And the angels of the Lord renewed the promise which God had made to Abraham, that Sarah his wife should bear a son, through whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed.

Their conversation ended, the angels arose to depart towards Sodom, Abraham accompanying them a portion of the way; and when he had brought them within sight of the city, he took leave of them to return to his own place; but the still small voice of God, addressed to the heart and understanding, but not to the ear, arrested his footsteps, and bade him listen to sublime truths revealed to none but him. The grievous sins of Sodom and Gomorrah had long provoked the Lord to wrath, and he had resolved to destroy the cities with their inhabitants. It was an awful doom; and Abraham, who knew that Jehovah is long-suffering and merciful, with abundant love for the creatures of his hands, interceded by prayer for the guilty people. In the agony of spirit which the words of God had caused, he, forgetting for a moment the eternal justice of the Creator, kneeled and cried, "Wilt thou

ABRAHAM AND THE THREE ANGELS.

destroy the righteous with the wicked? Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city: wilt thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein? That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

And the Lord said, "If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes."

"Behold now," replied Abraham, "I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes: peradventure there shall lack five of the fifty righteous: wilt thou destroy all the city for the lack of five?"

And God answered, "If I find there forty and five, I will not destroy it."

Abraham spake to the Most High yet again: "Peradventure there shall be forty found there?"

"I will not do it," said Jehovah, "for forty's sake."

And Abraham, still interceding, said, "Oh, let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak. Peradventure there shall thirty be found there?"

And God answered, "I will not do it if I find thirty there."

Still Abraham desisted not from his suit. "Behold now," he said, "I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord. Peradventure there shall be twenty found there?"

The Lord said, "I will not destroy it for twenty's sake."

"Oh, let not the Lord be angry," replied Abraham, "and I will speak yet but this once. Peradventure ten shall be found there."

Again the Lord answered, "I will not destroy it for ten's sake."

There is, perhaps, nothing more affecting than this instance of love and kindness towards the sinful race of man. The endurance and mercy of the Deity, who, for the sake of those whom he had endowed with his likeness, and into whom he had breathed life and purity, thought rather of pardon than of punishment, and was willing to allow a little virtue to outweigh numberless crimes and vices, are a study for humanity. If we thought of the goodness of the Almighty and of his care and kindness, few of those scenes of violence and outrage which so frequently occur among mankind, would be witnessed.

At even two angels presented themselves at the gate of Sodom, where Lot, the nephew of Abraham, sat to enjoy the cool breeze wafting from the lake that laved the walls of the city. And Lot rose to meet the angels, and bowed before them, and invited them to partake the hospitality of his house: but they answered, "Nay; we will abide in the street all

At length, however, his entreaties prevailed on them

to accept the shelter of his roof; and a homely feast was prepared by the favoured household for its heavenly visitants.

It was soon rumoured in Sodom, that Lot had strangers in his dwelling; young men, unknown in the city, who might, therefore, be wealthy and virtuous, and disposed to regard with evil eyes the proceedings of the inhabitants. Now, there were a great number of idle and desperate persons in the place, whose only occupation and amusement were plundering and abusing the unwary and timid. A rabble of such soon surrounded the house of Lot, and clamoured loudly to have the young travellers brought forth to them; but Lot refused, and urged them to abandon their wicked designs. Then the multitude became furious, and cried unto Lot, "Stand back! lest we sacrifice thee for coming between us and our desire." And they argued with each other: "This fellow came hither to sojourn; who hath made him a judge over us?" At last, they rushed forward to break the door of his habitation; but the angels protected Lot, and smote those who would have injured him with blindness; so that they wearied themselves in vain to find the entrance to his house.

When the uproar in the streets was stilled, and the darkness and silence of night had fallen upon the great city, the

angels spake to Lot, saying, "Is there any of thy family in Sodom, save those we have seen? for whatsoever thou hast, sons, daughters, and sons-in-law, take them from the city. The Lord hath sent us to destroy the place, because the cry of its abominations is great before Him." So Lot went to his daughters and their husbands, and told them the words of the angels, entreating them to arise and flee with him from the destruction which God was about to bring upon the city; but his sons-in-law scoffed at his words, and believed him not; thinking that he did but jest with them, because they worshipped not the same God as he, but partook of the idolatry and wickedness of their brethren. At the earnest supplication of their father, however, the daughters of Lot agreed to accompany him on the morrow towards the plain of Zoar.

Early in the morning, ere light had broken, the angels called Lot, and said, "Arise, take thy wife and thy two daughters, and go hence, lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city." Then, seeing that the family still lingered upon the threshold, their celestial guests caught them by the hands, and hastened them from Sodom, nor left them till they were at a safe distance from the devoted city. And when they turned to depart, the angels said to Lot,

"Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountains, lest thou be consumed."

In awe and agony of heart, Lot prayed unto the Lord. "Behold, now," he cried, "thy servant hath found grace in thy sight, and thou hast magnified thy mercy which thou hast shewn unto me in saving my life, I cannot escape to the mountain, lest some evil overtake me, and I die. A city is near to flee unto—a little one. Oh, let me escape thither (is it not a little one?) and my soul shall live."

Then the Lord, by the mouth of his angels, spake unto Lot, "See, I have accepted thee concerning this thing also, that I will not overthrow the city for which thou hast spoken. Haste thee, escape thither; for I cannot do anything until thou be come thither."

As Lot and his family journeyed towards the city of refuge, the day began to dawn. Never broke morning light more fearfully over the earth. It grew up in strange and fitful streaks of purple and crimson and yellow and ashey-grey, flitting away into the dun sky like the commingling colours which glow round the mouth of a heated furnace. The air seemed charged with liquid fire; and the sultry and sulphurous atmosphere grew thick around, till the breasts of men and of animals laboured heavily in the work of respi-

ration. Not a leaf stirred in the groves; but the boughs hung loose and flagging, as though their moisture had been exhaled by deadly blight. The very lake that lay, stretched like a slumbering giant, between Sodom and Gomorrah, seemed to have undergone a change of hue, and to have lost the life which it formerly derived from the springs in its bosom.

The inhabitants of the doomed cities awoke, and went forth before their usual hour to seek for freshness in the broad streets and noble avenues, which led to the temples of their gods; but the pestilential vapour of approaching death and destruction was everywhere diffused; and horror began to fill the countenances which were seen from the terraced roofs of the houses, from the lattices, and in the public places. Fear, an indefinite consciousness of pending evil, began to spread among the citizens, who looked eagerly towards the east for the rising sun—their supreme deity: but they were destined to feel his reviving beams no more. Thick, lurid clouds were gathering from all points of the horizon and feeble lightnings flew, with a hissing sound, through the foliage of the stately trees, and over the surface of the dark lake.

At length, rain-drops began to descend—scalding those upon whom they fell, like drops of molten iron. A shriek,

MARTIN, PX. GEN. 19, 24. BAGG, SC.

DESTRUCTION OF SODOM.

a wild and universal cry, ascended from Sodom, and was echoed with added shrillness from the neighbouring city. The people rushed in frantic terror and despair to the temples, but the lightnings followed them thither, notwithstanding the closed doors and windows. An ashy sulphurous smell mingled with the sacrifices which the affrighted priests hastily prepared to offer to their idols, and the flames were driven back into the faces of those who kindled them. Presently the booming thunder arose, and fiery hail descended thick and fast from heaven. The massy roofs of the temples crashed and groaned. The foundations shook; the walls were rent; and the blue and scorching lightning played on the impious multitudes collected to celebrate their own obsequies with heathen rites. Yells of agony, oaths, curses, prayers, and entreaties, were blended in one frightful outcry. Palace and cottage tottered and fell before the desolating storm. Throughout Sodom and throughout Gomorrah, and in the neighbouring plains, there was not one building left standing, nor one living person to be found, when the howling tempest ceased. The destroying angels had swept away man and his works, together with the green trees, the flowers, and the herbs of the field; and the place where Sodom and Gomorrah had stood, was thenceforth covered by the lake, which has ever since been called, from the bituminous

qualities of its water, the *Lake Asphalte.* The Syrian traveller still sees, or fancies he sees, beneath the sluggish waves, the ruins of the cities which were overthrown for their manifold wickedness, by the divine vengeance.

Lot and his family, meanwhile, journeyed towards Zoar; but his wife, disregarding the command of the Almighty, looked back upon Sodom, and was instantly stricken by the hand of the Lord, and became a pillar of salt; an awful example of the anger of God against disobedience. Lot and his daughters, after sojourning for a time in Zoar, departed thence and dwelt in a cave among the mountains.

Abraham had arisen early in the morning of the day when Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed, and going up to the place where he had stood to intercede for the wicked inhabitants, he looked towards those cities and the surrounding plain, and lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace. So Abraham, having seen the sublime work of the one true and only God, journeyed from that place towards the south and abode between Kadesh and Shur.

PATRIARCHAL LIFE OF ABRAHAM.

ABRAHAM had two wives. The name of the one was Sarah, a kinswoman of her husband, and the other's name was Hagar, who was an Egyptian bondwoman. In the early ages of the world it was common for men to have several wives, and this was not then esteemed sinful. Hagar had a son named Ishmael, who was born when Abraham his father was fourscore and six years old. The Lord had said concerning Ishmael, that he would be "a wild man, whose hand would be against every man, and every man's hand against him; but that he should nevertheless be blessed, and fruitful, and become a great nation." And Hagar grew proud and vain because of her son, and because Sarah her mistress was childless.

When Abraham was a hundred years old, however, the Lord fulfilled his promise to Sarah, and she also had a son, whose name was called Isaac, because of the joy which he brought to his father's household. And when in due course of time the child was weaned, Abraham made a great feast for his herdsmen and servants, and for the strangers in whose country

they sojourned: but Ishmael, who had caught a mocking spirit from his mother, laughed and derided the rejoicings of his father, and treated his brother Isaac with scorn. Then Sarah, seeing the pride and arrogance of the son of Hagar, was angry, and solicited Abraham, saying "Cast out this bondwoman and her son; for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac." It was in vain that Abraham remonstrated against the harsh desire of his best-beloved wife. Sarah ceased not to importune him to send away Ishmael and his mother; and Abraham prayed to the Almighty for counsel and consolation under this affliction, in which the feelings of a father and husband were put to such severe trial. Whatever were his offences, the good old man felt that the lad was his son—the child whom he had nestled in his bosom, whose first steps he had tended, whose earliest accents he had heard with joy, and whose speech he had trained to reverence of the true God. The thought of sending him forth, a portionless wanderer, to seek a home whithersoever one might be found, grieved Abraham to the heart, and his head was bowed on his breast in sorrow.

The Lord beheld the affliction of his servant, and said unto him, "Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy bondwoman. In all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken to her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed

be called. Of the son of the bondwoman, also, will I make a nation, because he is thine." Then Abraham no longer hesitated or mourned, for he knew that the promises of the Almighty failed not, and that his son Ishmael was in God's holy keeping. So he arose early in the morning, and took bread and a bottle of water, and gave them to Hagar, to whom also he consigned the youth his son. And Abraham blessed the boy and his mother, and sent them away towards the wilderness of Beersheba.

It was with heavy hearts that the wanderers departed on their lone and cheerless way. They were strangers, and knew not where to seek a refuge; they deemed that they had offended the Almighty by despising his word concerning Isaac, and the weight of desolation and despair pressed on their minds. At length, sore-footed and weary, scorched with the burning Syrian sun, and without hope, they began to faint on their journey. The water with which Abraham had supplied them was spent in the bottle, and they looked vainly around for a spring to replenish their store or to slake their parching thirst. Ishmael could proceed no further: but lay down to rest beneath a solitary shrub that grew by the way side. And his mother, who could afford no relief to her child in his extremity, wept bitterly, and sat by his side, abandoned to grief. The boy grew fainter and fainter, his voice failed, his

limbs refused their office, and his languid eyes assumed the glassy hue of approaching death. Then Hagar arose in agony of heart, and bestowing a farewell glance upon her expiring son, she went and sat over against him, at the distance of a bow-shot; for she could not bear to witness his death. They two were alone in that vast wilderness; no human aid was nigh; and death and the darkness of night were stealing upon them. Hagar, full of sorrowful feelings, and of dread and bitter remorse, sobbed and wept aloud; and the low moaning of Ishmael made the gathering gloom and the light soughing of the evening breeze more awfully impressive.

But the Lord saw the distress of these solitary creatures, and, remembering His promise to His servant Abraham, He meant not to forsake them. So when the prayers of the youth and his mother arose, God sent an angel from Heaven who called unto Hagar, "What aileth thee, Hagar? fear not; for God hath heard the voice of the child where he is. Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in thine hand; for I will make him a great nation." The mother heard the words and was comforted; and when she arose she saw at a short distance a well of clear water, which seemed to have sprung there by miracle. Strength, courage, and fortitude, such as maternal love never fails to supply while hope remains, were

HAGAR AND ISHMAEL.

suddenly renewed; and Hagar hastened and filled the bottle with water and gave drink to her son, who was speedily restored to health and vigour; and the outcast thenceforth felt that the Lord was great and merciful. From that time the Almighty specially watched over and prospered Ishmael, who dwelt in the wilderness of Paran, and became an archer. At a proper age his mother took for him a wife from among her own country-women, the Egyptians; and Ishmael became the father of twelve princes, and ruled the country from Havilah to Shur, going from Egypt towards Assyria. The full years of the life of Ishmael were a hundred and thirty-seven. His descendants still inhabit the wilderness, in which their father resided; and are known as the Arabs of the Desert, "whose hands are against every man, and every man's hand against them."

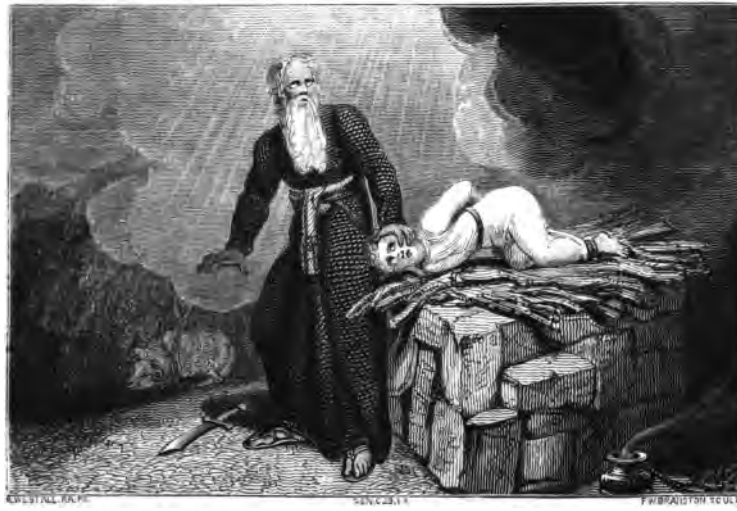
Abraham, after he had sent away his first-born son, dwelt many days in the land of the Philistines; and God appeared unto him, and tempted him concerning his confidence in the faith and worship which he had followed from his youth upward.—"Abraham!" said the Lord.

The Patriarch answered, "Behold, here I am."

And God said, "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of."

To the commandment of his Maker Abraham had nothing to offer but implicit obedience; and notwithstanding that the sacrifice required was the son of his old age—the only child of his beloved Sarah—he yielded to the will of the Deity with pious resignation, nothing doubting that the Almighty would still accomplish his promise to make all nations of the earth blessed in the seed of Isaac, though the way might be incomprehensible to human reason. We must not suppose that Abraham was without the feelings of humanity. The struggle of parting with Ishmael; his affectionate solicitude on the capture of his nephew Lot; his intercession for the wicked inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, all prove that he possessed the keenest and kindliest susceptibilities of our nature: but his confidence in the wisdom, justice, and mercy of God, strengthened him to endure whatever agony might be inflicted on him during his earthly pilgrimage, assured that he should be rewarded with eternal happiness in the world beyond the grave. He therefore rose up early in the morning, and saddling his ass, took with him two of the young men who served him, and Isaac his son. Everything, even to the cleaving of wood to kindle fire for a burnt-offering, was prepared for the sacrifice, ere Abraham departed for the place of which the Lord in the meantime had told him.

After journeying two days, Abraham, on the third, lifted



ABRAHAM OFFERING ISAAC.

up his eyes and saw the hill of sacrifice afar off. Then he said to his servants, "Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you." So he took the wood which had been provided, and Isaac bare it to the hill of sacrifice, while his father carried the lamp to kindle the fire, and the knife to slay the destined victim; and they went together to the appointed spot—the one silent and thoughtful, the other full of the exuberant joy and curiosity which beguiles the way with untravelled youth. But ere they had reached the termination of their journey, Isaac said to his father, "Behold the fire and the wood; but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?"

Abraham, evading a question which called forth his tenderest feelings, answered, "My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt-offering."

On arriving at the place indicated, Abraham erected there an altar of unhewn stones from the fragments of rock which were scattered about in that lonely spot; and after laying the wood in order, he bound his son Isaac, and laid him upon the altar on the wood, then stretching forth his hand, he took the knife to slay his son.

At this moment the angel of the Lord called to him out of heaven, saying "Abraham, Abraham!"

The knife dropped from the trembling hand of the patriarch, a quiver of revulsive feeling ran through his frame, and he gazed upward towards the sky.

The heavenly voice resumed: "Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing that thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me."

Then Abraham released Isaac, and looking round with unalloyed joy, beheld behind him a ram caught in a thicket by its horns. So he took the ram, and offered it for a sacrifice instead of his beloved son. And Abraham called the name of that place, Jehovah-jireh, which is the same spot where, ages afterwards, the Lord's only son, the Lamb of God, became a spotless sacrifice for the sins of the world.

From the midst of the smoke of the burnt-offering the voice of the angel was again heard: "By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord; for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son; that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea-shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies: and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice."

And Abraham returned to Beer-sheba with his son and his servants; and the Lord increased the worldly substance of Abraham, and blessed him with peace and happiness.

At length, when she had attained the age of one-hundred and twenty-seven years, Sarah, the mother of Isaac, died at Kirjath-arba, afterwards called Hebron; and the friends and household of Abraham were gathered together according to the custom of those days to weep and mourn for her. And Abraham, desirous to keep the ashes of his believing wife apart from those of the idolatrous Canaanites, who inhabited the surrounding country, went forth to crave audience of the sons of Heth, and said, "I am a stranger and a sojourner with you: give me a possession of a burying-place, that I may bury my dead out of my sight."

The answers made to this touching application forcibly demonstrate the respect and esteem which the upright conduct, the amiable qualities, and the wealth of Abraham had procured for him from the surrounding tribes. "Hear us, my Lord," replied the children of Heth; "in the choice of our sepulchres bury thy dead: none of us shall withhold from thee his sepulchre."

But Abraham entreated that Ephron the son of Zohar would give him the cave of Machpelah, situated at the end of his field, for as much money as it was worth:—so strictl-

scrupulous was he of blending the memory of her, who had been chosen by the Almighty as one of those through whose loins the Redeemer of mankind should descend upon earth, with that of persons who had forsaken the worship of the true God.

"Hear me, my Lord," answered Ephron the Hittite: "the field and the cave that is therein will I give thee; in the presence of the sons of my people give I it thee: bury thy dead."

Abraham, however, wished a permanent burial-place for his family in the land which had been promised him for an inheritance, and he could not consent to be indebted for this to one whose offer of free burial among the noblest of the land had been refused: so he replied to Ephron, "If thou wilt give it, I pray thee, hear me. I will give thee money for the field; take it of me, and I will bury my dead there."

Abraham then weighed to Ephron four hundred shekels of silver, the full value of the field in money then current among merchants; and the field of Ephron, with the cave and the trees that were therein, were made sure to Abraham for an inheritance in the presence of all the children of Heth. And Abraham buried Sarah in the cave of Machpelah, before Mamre, in the land of the Canaanites; and Abraham and his servants mourned for her many days, according to the custom of eastern nations.

MARTIN, PX. GEN. 23, 19. SMITH, SC.

THE BURIAL OF SARAH.

After Sarah was laid in the tomb, and the days of her mourning were accomplished, Abraham, being well stricken in years, and desirous of seeing his son Isaac established as his heir, called to him the most confidential of his servants, and took from him a solemn oath, that he would go into the land of Mesopotamia, to the country and kindred of Abraham, and thence take for Isaac a wife from among those who maintained the pure worship of the Creator; for, said the Patriarch, "thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell." The servant accordingly sware to him; and being assigned a retinue worthy of his embassy, departed to the city of Nahor, where Bethuel, the nephew of Abraham, abode.

It was the cool of evening when this faithful messenger arrived at a well without the city—"even the time that women went out to draw water;" and the servant prayed to the God of his master for good speed to his errand and kindness to Abraham; and entreated, saying "O Lord, let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, 'Let down the pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink;' and she shall say, 'Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also;' let the same be she that thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac; and thereby shall I know that thou hast shewed kindness unto my master." And before he had done speaking in his her

Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel, the son of Abraham's brother Nahor, came out with her pitcher upon her shoulder;—a damsel fair to look upon, a virgin, with modest gait and cheerful countenance. Her did the servant of Abraham run to meet as she came up from the well; and he entreated her according to the tenor of his prayer, and her reply was conformable to the words also set forth in his supplication. Moreover, Rebekah gave drink to the servant, and emptied her pitcher into the trough, and ran again to the well, and drew water for all the camels.

The steward, who had not expected so literal a performance of his desires, was mute with wonder; but when the camels had done drinking, he took from among the presents with which he had been entrusted a golden ear-ring of half a shekel weight, and two golden bracelets of ten shekels weight, and bestowing them upon the maiden, enquired the name of her father, and solicited hospitality for himself and his retinue. It was with exceeding joy that he learned her parentage, insomuch that he bowed his head to the dust, and worshipped the Lord. Rebekah was astonished at his words and his liberality, and ran and told the members of her father's household what she had heard and seen. Then Laban, the brother of the damsel, when he had seen the ear-ring and the bracelets upon Rebekah's hands, and heard her narration,

REBEKAH AT THE WELL.

came forth to the well, and said to Abraham's servant, Come in, thou blessed of the Lord; wherefore standest thou without? I have prepared the house and room for the camels." Thus invited, the messenger and those who were with him went and lodged in the house of his master's nephew.

If the family of Bethuel were gratified with the simple and honest manners of the good steward before, how greatly was their delight increased when he related to them the story of his errand, and told them how God had prospered Abraham, and made him great and rich to such a degree, that his alliance and friendship were eagerly sought by the Canaanitish princes and chiefs: but that Abraham had taken from his servant an oath, to procure for Isaac a wife from among the daughters of Syria, of the kindred of Abraham. Bethuel, and Laban his son, when the steward had concluded, exclaimed with one accord, "The thing proceedeth from the Lord; we cannot speak unto thee bad or good. Behold, Rebekah is before thee; take her and go, and let her be thy master's son's wife, as the Lord hath spoken."

Then was a feast made for Abraham's servants; and the steward brought forth jewels of silver and jewels of gold, and splendid raiment, and gave them to Rebekah as presents from her future spouse; and to the father, mother, and brother of the damsel also did he give many precious things, to testify

at once the magnificence and the kind remembrance of his master Abraham.

Next morning the steward arose to depart; but the mother and brother of Rebekah begged him to abide with them a few days, that the maiden might not so suddenly be taken from among the friends of her childhood, but that they might have an opportunity to do honour to Abraham by their hospitality to his messengers. The servant, however, refused to tarry, saying, "Hinder me not: the Lord hath prospered my journey. Send me away that I may go to my master." Then Rebekah was consulted, and she agreeing to go forthwith unto Isaac, they blessed her, and sent her away, accompanied by her nurse and her maidens, and escorted by the steward of Abraham and his men.

At this time Isaac, who was forty years old, dwelt in the south country, by the way of the well Lahai-roi; and he went forth, at eventide, into the verdant fields to meditate on the goodness and glory of God; and, lo, as he lifted up his eyes, he saw at a distance a train of camels, which, on drawing nearer, he knew from the tinkling of their silver bells and their rich caparisons, to be those which his father had despatched into Syria. Rebekah, also, looking across the plain, beheld Isaac, and enquired of Abraham's servant who he was. And when she was informed that it was her spouse, she

lighted off the camel, and took a veil and covered herself; for, in the East, it was then, and still is accounted improper, for a female to let her face be seen by him who is to be her husband until the ceremony of marriage has been performed.

Abraham made great rejoicings on the wedding of his son; and to Rebekah he assigned the tent of Sarah, wherein she dwelt with her husband Isaac, who, loving her, was then first comforted after his mother's death.

And Abraham died at the age of a hundred and seventy-five years. His sons, Isaac and Ishmael, buried him in the cave of Machpelah, wherein the ashes of Sarah had been lain. Isaac inherited his father's flocks and herds, and the greater part of his wealth; the other sons of Abraham, for he had several by a wife whom he married after the death of Sarah, having received large presents during their father's lifetime, and been sent away into the east country. Ishmael had, probably, been provided for at the time of his settlement in the wilderness, when his mother took for him a wife from the women of Egypt.

ISAAC AND HIS SONS.

After the death of Abraham, the Lord blessed Isaac, and continued to him his loving-kindness; and Rebekah bare twin sons, of whom the first-born was named Esau, and the younger, Jacob. Of these the Lord, previously to their birth, had said, "They shall be two nations, and two manner of people; the one shall be stronger than the other, and the elder shall serve the younger."

When the children grew, Esau, who was red, and all over like a hairy garment, loved to be in the fields and forests, among the wild mountains and glens of his native land, hunting the gazelle, the hill-goat, and the savage beasts which sometimes scoured the plains, and made havoc among his father's flocks. Jacob was a plain man, less courageous, of pastoral habits, seldom wandering from the vicinity of the tents. Their father, Isaac, bestowed his greatest affection upon Esau, "because he did eat of his venison;" but Rebekah loved Jacob.

It happened, after one of his hunting excursions, that Esau

returned to the plain, faint and weary with the heat of the season and his severe exercise, and hungry from the length of time he had been out without food. At the tent of Jacob, which was pitched in the shade of some overhanging palms and pleasant forest trees, in the neighbourhood of a crystal spring, Esau perceived his brother with a dish of fresh-prepared pottage. The legs of the hunter could scarcely sustain his weight; lassitude seemed to have overpowered his nerves; and the delicious food before him appeared, at the moment, to be of an importance and worth secondary only to life itself. He went straight to Jacob, and craved earnestly, "Give me, I pray thee, that same red pottage, for I am faint."

Jacob however was subtle, and appears to have been somewhat tinctured with avarice; he therefore sought to take advantage of the prostration of body, and consequent want of mental energy which was apparent in his brother, and instead of freely supplying the necessities of Esau, he demanded from him the transfer of his birth-right as the price of relief. This birth-right, it should be observed, consisted, in ancient times, among the race from which Isaac sprang, in a double portion of the paternal estate, and the right of chieftainship in their tribe or family.

Esau, completely exhausted, sank down at the entrance of

the tent, and in a tone of languor said, "Behold, I am at the point to die; what profit then shall my birth-right do me?"

In this state of helplessness, he consented therefore to Jacob's proposal, and offered to relinquish his claim to the chief inheritance; but his brother, feeling how unnatural was such a compact, insisted upon its being ratified by an irrevocable oath. So Esau sware to Jacob, and sold his birth-right for a meal of bread and pottage of lentiles. "And he ate, and drank, and rose up, and went his way:" thus, by trusting to man's aid, rather than to the saving power of the Almighty, who had promised to make of him a great nation, he is said to have "despised his birth-right." The conduct of Jacob in the matter was highly blameable, and did not pass without punishment in many after years of fear and remorse.

Subsequently a famine in the country induced Isaac to go into the land of the Philistines, where the Lord blessed him, and where from what he sowed he received in the same year an hundredfold. He waxed great and wealthy therefore; having large flocks and herds, and abundance of servants, inasmuch, that the Philistines envied him, and stopped up the wells which the servants of Abraham had dug to water the cattle; and when this, through the perseverance of Isaac's servants who digged fresh wells, availed not to drive the

ESAU SELLING HIS BIRTHRIGHT.

wealthy Hebrews from the rich pastures of Palestine, Abimelech, the king of the country, said openly to Isaac, "Depart from amongst us, for thou art mightier than we." Thus had the Lord fulfilled his promise to his servant Abraham, to abide with his seed, and make them a terror to their enemies.

Departing from Gerar, Isaac pitched his tents in Beersheba, where Abimelech, accompanied by his friend Ahuzzath, a Canaanitish chieftain, and Phiçol, the chief captain of his army, went to him and demanded that, forasmuch as he was the blessed of the Lord, he should make a covenant with them to do them no hurt. And they and Isaac feasted together, and sware to maintain peace one towards another, and departed each to his several place.

Shortly after this, Esau, being forty years old, and having become associated by his wandering habits with the heathen tribes dwelling in Canaan, took to wife Judith, the daughter of Beeri, and Bashemath, the daughter of Elor, both of whom were Hittites; connexions which were a grief of mind both to Isaac and Rebekah.

And it came to pass that, when Isaac was old, and his eyes were dim, so that he could not see, he called to him his eldest son Esau, and said, "Behold now, I am old, I know not the day of my death: now therefore take, I pray thee, thy weapons, thy quiver and thy bow, and go out to the field,

and take me some venison; and make me savoury meat, such as I love, and bring it to me, that I may eat; that my soul may bless thee before I die." The love of Isaac for Esau appears to have rendered him forgetful of that portion of the Almighty's promise, in which it had been said—"The elder of thy sons shall serve the younger;" or, feeling doubtful of the interpretation of the prophecy, the partial father wished to avert its literal fulfilment, and to settle his patriarchal succession on his first-born, by a testamentary benediction.

Rebekah, however, had overheard the words of her husband, and knowing their import, she instantly conceived a project for depriving Esau of his intended blessing, in favour of her more beloved son, Jacob. After seeing her eldest child depart on his errand, therefore, she summoned the younger to her presence, and having acquainted him with the desire of Isaac, thus disclosed to him a plot to delude his father. "Go now to the flock," she said, "and fetch thence two good kids of the goats; and I will make them into savoury meat for thy father, such as he loveth: and thou shalt bring it to thy father, that he may eat, and bless thee before his death."

Jacob, though unscrupulous as to assisting in the proposed deception, hesitated at first, from a doubt of its success. "Behold," he said, "Esau my brother is a hairy man, and I am a smooth man: my father peradventure will feel me, and I

shall seem to him as a deceiver, and thus bring upon me a curse instead of a blessing."

His mother, however, silenced his apprehensions. "Upon me," she replied, "be thy curse, my son; obey thou my voice, and bring me what I have required."

So Jacob brought the kids to Rebekah, who, having cooked them in the way desired by Isaac, took raiment belonging to Esau, and clothed therein her favourite son; at the same time, covering his hands and his neck with the skins of the slaughtered goats. Then Jacob, thus disguised, carried to his father's tent the savoury meat, and tendered it for his acceptance. It is probable that his extreme age had impaired some of the other faculties of Isaac besides his sight and strength; for when he heard the voice of Jacob, he does not appear to have distinctly recognised it, but enquired to which of his sons he was speaking.

How humiliated must Jacob have felt, when he found it necessary to support his imposture by a direct falsehood—and that to his father. "I am Esau, thy first-born," he said; "I have done according as thou badest me. Arise, I pray thee, sit and eat of my venison, that thy soul may bless me."

Isaac, dubious if his memory or his ears deceived him, en-

quired, "How is it, my son, that thou hast found it so quickly?"

The deceiver hesitated not to say, "Because the Lord, thy God, brought it to me."

Still Isaac was not satisfied. "Come near, I pray thee," he said, "that I may feel thee, my son, whether thou be my very son Esau or not."

And Jacob went near to his father, who feeling his hands that they were hairy, still remained in ignorance of the cheat practised upon him; and said, "The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau." Yet, before finally bestowing his benediction, the old man put another interrogatory. "Art thou," he asked, "my very son Esau?"

Jacob, compelled to maintain one falsehood by another, answered, "I am."

Then Isaac caused the venison to be brought near; and having partaken of it, and drunk wine to strengthen him, he called his son to his bedside and kissed him; when smelling his raiment, and recognising it as that appropriated to sylvan pursuits, the patriarch being inspired with a prophetic spirit, joyfully exclaimed, "See, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field which the Lord hath blessed: therefore God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine. Let people serve thee, and nations

ISAAC BLESSING JACOB.

bow down to thee: be lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother's sons bow down to thee and blessed be he that blesseth thee."

Rebekah, meanwhile, kept watch without the tent, to give warning to her son Jacob, should Esau arrive before her stratagem had entirely succeeded; for she knew that her first-born was a man prone to anger, and not slow to avenge an injury; and the wrong which had been now inflicted on him was of the cruellest kind, and not likely to be effaced except by the blood of the perpetrator. For His own wise purposes, the Lord permitted Jacob to depart from the presence of his father, ere Esau returned from the chace. Scarcely was he gone, however, when the breathless hunter arrived.

Having hastily prepared savoury meat, Esau entered his father's tent, saying, "Let my father arise, and eat of his son's venison, that thy soul may bless me."

Isaac, starting from slumber, as at a voice from the dead, earnestly enquired, "Who art thou?"

The reply was brief, but convincing—the well-remembered voice and tone could not be mistaken—"I am thy son, thy first-born, Esau."

Then Isaac trembled very exceedingly; and, overwhelmed with grief, he said, "Who—where is he that hath taken venison and brought it to me; and I have eaten of all before

thou camest, and have blessed him?" The voice of the old man faltered, and he sank back upon his pillow, exclaiming however, as he did so, as if by irresistible impulse, "Yea, and he shall be blessed!"

It was a moment of agony to Esau; for though he had been wayward and wilful, and, in many important matters, had given offence to his father, and had turned aside from the worship of the God of Abraham, he still loved Isaac, and had hoped, at least, to inherit the mysterious promise of salvation, the claim to which had not been sold with his birth-right. The words of his father, therefore, struck despair to his heart, and his emotion produced "a great and bitter cry." He threw himself beside the couch of his parent, and imploringly ejaculated, "O, my father, bless me, even me also."

Then said Isaac, "Thy brother came with subtilty, and hath taken away thy blessing."

Esau, ingenuous aud daring himself, had a contempt for whatever appeared like fraud or cowardice. "Is not my brother rightly named Jacob?" he said, alluding to the Hebrew signification of the word, which is *supplanter* or *deceiver*. "He hath supplanted me twice. He took away my birth-right; and, behold, now he hath taken away my blessing. Yet, my father, hast thou not reserved a blessing for me?"

"Alas," replied Isaac, "I have made him thy lord, and

ISAAC BLESSING ESAU.

all his brethren have I given to him; for servants, and with corn and wine have I sustained him: and what shall I do now unto thee, my son?"

"Hast thou but one blessing?" returned Esau, still prostrate in person and in mind, at the feet of his father; "bless me, even me also, O my father!" And, in the deep anguish of his soul, Esau lifted up his voice and wept.

Touched with his son's humiliation, Isaac again aroused himself, and said, "Behold, thy dwelling shall be amid the fatness of the earth, and the dew of heaven from above. By thy sword shalt thou live, and shalt serve thy brother; and it shall come to pass when thou shalt have the dominion, that thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck."

This, compared with the benediction bestowed upon Jacob, was equivocal and valueless, and Esau felt that he had been dealt with, according to human estimation, unjustly as well as treacherously. When he left the presence of his father, therefore, it was with angry, if not malignant feelings; and these were increased into absolute hatred by the subsequent conduct of Jacob, who cautiously avoided his brother's presence, except when their mother was nigh, to protect him from the consequences of his deceit. At length, from suppressed murmurs, Esau's hostility broke out into open threats, "The days of mourning for my father," he said, "are at hand; then will I slay my brother Jacob."

These words being reported to Rebekah, filled the matron with alarm. The determined character of her eldest son was well known to her, and knowing the means by which the blessing intended for him had been wrested in favour of Jacob, she appears to have had less faith in its efficacy than in the menaces which followed it. She accordingly sent for her younger son from the plains, where he tended his father's flocks, and said to him, "Behold, thy brother Esau, as touching thee, doth comfort himself, purposing to kill thee. Now therefore, my son, obey my voice; and arise, flee thou to Laban my brother, at Haran, and tarry with him till thy brother's fury turn away; until his anger turn away from thee, and he forget that which thou hast done to him: then I will send and fetch thee from thence; else I shall be deprived of you both in one day—of thee, by the hand of thy brother, like Abel, the son of Adam; and of Esau, by the denunciation of the Lord, the avenger of blood."

Finding her favourite son disposed to implicit obedience, Rebekah next appealed to Isaac, with whom, however, she still had recourse to dissimulation, scarcely daring to allude to the real motives for her proceedings. She desired the good old man to consent to the absence of Jacob, on the ground that, by remaining at Beer-sheba, he might become attached to the Canaanitish people, and be induced to take a wife from

among their maidens. "I am weary of my life," she said, "because of the daughters of Heth. If Jacob take a wife of the daughters of the land, what good shall my life do me?"

This was a subject on which she knew that her husband would be deeply affected, for he had never ceased to lament the marriage of Esau with heathen women. The apprehension of Rebekah being communicated, therefore, to Isaac, the patriarch sent for Jacob, and having again bestowed on him his blessing, he said, "Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan; arise, go to Padan-aram, to the house of Laban, thy mother's brother. And God Almighty bless thee, and make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, that thou mayest be a multitude of people. May He give the blessing of Abraham to thee, and to thy seed with thee; that thou mayest inherit the land wherein thou art a stranger, which God gave unto Abraham."

So Jacob was sent away to the house of Laban, the Syrian; and Esau was defeated in the design which he had conceived against his brother's life. The character of Esau, it may be mentioned, appears to have been impetuous and hasty, but not permanently malicious or evil. His disobedience concerning his wives was rather the consequence of thoughtlessness, than of a premeditated design to thwart his father's wishes; and when he saw by the sending away of Jacob, lest he

should fall into a similar error, that his own conduct had given offence, he took, in addition to his Canaanitish wives, a daughter of Ishmael, the son of Abraham, who, he supposed, as being of the kindred of God's chosen family, would be more agreeable to his parents—the children of Ishmael not having as yet, it may be presumed, forsaken the worship of Jehovah.

SERVITUDE, MARRIAGES, AND RETURN OF JACOB.

JACOB, departing from Beer-sheba, bent his steps across the mountainous wilderness leading towards Haran. It was a long and lonely journey. The country was thinly peopled; and what population there was, was gathered into cities and towns remote from each other, and situated in places selected rather for the natural strength of their position, as places of defence, than for their convenience. A system of rapine, even at that early period, had become established among the tribes inhabiting Palestine—"the land flowing with milk and honey, and abounding in corn and wine, and food for cattle." The rich valleys were uncultivated, or, if turned to account at all, it was as pasture for sheep, of which, however, the native inhabitants—a warlike race—had few. The uplands, though overgrown with the wild vine and the olive, the pomegranate, the pear, the almond, and the date, were left to fructify at random. The plains, from want of shade and of reviving moisture, were arid and barren; yet, where an occasional spring bubbled up, the natural wealth of the land revealed

itself in the spontaneous growth of the richest flowers, the most luxuriant grass, and the most fruitful and pleasant trees and shrubs. The surpassing beauty of the land, and its capacity for producing all that might afford gratification to man, was everywhere visible. Cultivation alone was absent. Notwithstanding its solitude, therefore, it was a goodly country to look upon, more especially to him who now traversed it, with the knowledge that it was to be his heritage for innumerable generations.

In the course of his journey, Jacob was overtaken by night, which in the East falls suddenly, without an intermediate twilight or gloaming, in a place where no town, village, or shepherd's hut could be found. He was compelled, therefore, to tarry all night, with the broad sky for his only covering. In that climate, however, except in the most inclement seasons, the genial warmth and blandness of the atmosphere, render the earth no unpleasant resting-place; so Jacob, though fearing it may be some indefinite lurking evil, was fain to take one of the stones which were scattered about for his pillow, and lay down there to rest.

And, lo! in the night there appeared to him a glorious vision, dispelling all fear and loneliness from his heart, and inspiring him as a prophet, with holy fervour and confidence. A ladder seemed placed upon the earth, the top of which was hid in

JACOB'S VISION OF THE LADDER.

the radiant light of heaven itself: and angels ascended and descended from the throne of God, to the spot where His favoured servant reposed. As Jacob looked upon the heavenly beings above him, the clear and solemn voice of the Lord rung in his ear. "I," said the Sublime, "am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac; the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it and to thy seed. Thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south; and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; nor will I leave thee until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of."

At morning, when Jacob awoke from his sleep, impressed with the awful, yet happy vision with which he had been visited, exclaimed with devotion, referring probably to the loneliness he had experienced on the preceding evening,—"Surely the Lord is in this place and I knew it not." But when he recalled all the circumstances and details of his dream—the angels of God, the glory and brightness of the unveiled heavens, and the living voice of Omnipotence—he trembled, and was afraid, saying, "How full of dread is this place! This is none other but the house of God, and this it the gate of heaven."

Then Jacob arose, and took the stone which had served for his pillow, and set it up for a pillar or altar, and poured oil thereon, and worshipped the Lord; and he made there a vow to serve God all the days of his life, and to appropriate to His service the tenth of all the substance with which the Almighty should bless him.

On approaching Haran, Jacob beheld a well in a field, beside which were three flocks lying, and upon the mouth of the well was a great stone, to protect it from dust and drift, which the hot sun of the East, and its sudden gusts, render so prevalent. Other flocks were also gathering around the spot, the well being that from which the cattle of the neighbourhood were watered. Jacob, sympathising with the shepherds in their occupation, approached them without fear or hesitation, and accosting them, asked, "Whence be ye, my brethren?"

To which the herdsmen replied, "Of Haran."

"And know ye Laban," continued the interrogator, "the descendant of Nahor?"

"We know him," replied the stranger.

"Is he well?" resumed Jacob.

"He is well," answered the men; and, behold, Rachel his daugther cometh with her father's sheep."

Then Jacob, wishing perhaps to have an opportunity of making himself known to the daughter of his uncle, unrestrained by the presence of the shepherds, said to the latter,

"Lo, it is yet high day, and not time to gather the cattle together; water ye the sheep, and go and feed them."

But the herdsman replied, "We cannot, until all the flocks be gathered, and till the stone be rolled from the well's mouth."

And while the shepherds and Jacob conversed, Rachel arrived at the place with her flock. Then Jacob, seeing her, and knowing from what he had just been informed, that she was the daughter of his mother's brother, approached the well, and rolling the stone from its mouth, gave water to Rachel's flock; and afterwards he made himself known to, and saluted her, and wept for pleasure that they had met. Rachel, too, who had heard much from her father of his sister Rebekah, the wife of Isaac, was overjoyed, and ran to her father to acquaint him of Jacob's arrival.

Laban instantly hastened to meet his nephew, and welcomed him with kind and cordial embraces, and invited him to his house, saying, "Surely thou art my bone and my flesh." And Jacob abode an honoured guest with his uncle Laban, for the space of a month, the period at that time of eastern hospitality; not, however, that he was an idle visitor. Jacob had passed a life of activity among flocks and herds; and during his stay he tended the cattle of his uncle, with such benefit to their owner, that Laban, fearing the young

man would otherwise depart speedily, proposed to him to continue his residence at Haran, and superintend his affairs for hire. "Tell me," he said, "what shall thy wages be?"

Now Jacob had seen the daughters of Laban, for he had two, Leah the elder, and Rachel the younger; and Jacob loved Rachel, who was beautiful, and mild, and modest, and he desired to make her his wife. So he said to Laban, "I will serve thee seven years for Rachel thy younger daughter."

Laban answered, "It is better that I give her to thee than to another man: abide therefore with me."

And Jacob abode with his uncle, tending his flocks in the field, and managing all his affairs, with the zeal and devotedness of a son, for seven years; and they seemed to the young man as a few days only compared with the reward which was to crown his services. And when the time was fulfilled, Jacob claimed his bride; but Laban had dealt guilefully with Jacob, and then, for the first time, informed him that, according to the custom of that country, it was deemed unlawful to bestow the younger daughter in marriage before the elder. Jacob was therefore compelled to accept Leah for his wife; but at the same time his uncle said, "Fulfil also Rachel's week of years, and she shall be thine for thy services."

To this proposal, so great was his love for Rachel, Jacob without hesitation consented, and he served Laban seven

other years, and became the husband of the woman on whom he had bestowed his heart. And Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah, which, when the Almighty saw, he gave children to the despised wife, while she who was most beloved was childless.

Jacob continued his services to Laban, and in course of time he had ten sons and one daughter; and God then remembered Rachel, and she bare a son, who was named Joseph. Then Jacob said to Laban, "Give me my wives and my children, for whom I have served thee, and send me away, that I may go to my own country."

Laban, however, knowing that the Lord had blessed him for his son-in-law's sake, was unwilling that the latter should depart; and, after entreaty, Jacob consented to stay for certain wages which were fixed between them—in order that he might be able to provide for his own household and family. And God was with Jacob alway; and the man increased exceedingly, and had much cattle, and maid servants, and man servants, and camels, and asses. But the sons of Laban, seeing that their sister's husband prospered even more than their father, whom he served, became even envious and angry; and they murmured against him, and turned away the kindness of Laban, and embittered the life of Jacob, until the latter resolved to return to the dwelling of his father Isaac—a determination in which he was strengthened by a vision,

wherein the Lord appeared to him and said, "I, the God of Beth-el, where thou anointedst the pillar, and vowedst a vow unto me, have seen all that Laban doeth unto thee; now therefore arise, get thee out of this land, and return unto the land of thy kindred." Leah and Rachel also were desirous to be gone, for their father had become estranged from them in consequence of the prosperity of Jacob, and they urged him at once to obey the voice of God.

So Jacob took his wives, his servants, his camels, his flocks, and all his substance and wealth, and stealing away unawares, fled with all speed towards Mount Gilead, while Laban was engaged in sheep-shearing at a distance from home. On the third day after the departure of his son-in-law, however, it was told Laban that Jacob had fled. Then Laban gathered his retainers and friends, and, after pursuing the fugitives for seven days, came in sight of them at Mount Gilead, where they had pitched their tents. But the Lord appeared unto Laban in a dream by night, and said, "Take heed that thou speak not to Jacob, either good or bad."

When Laban arose in the morning he went to the tent of Jacob, but the remembrance of his vision restrained his anger. "Why," he said, "hast thou stolen away unawares, and carried off my daughters as captives taken with the sword? Wherefore didst thou not tell me, that I might have sent

thee away with mirth and with songs, with tabret and with harp?"

Jacob answered, "Because I was afraid thou wouldst take thy daughters from me."

"Yet," resumed Laban, "though thou wouldst needs be gone to thy father's house, wherefore hast thou stolen my household relics?"

Rachel, it should be mentioned, had taken away certain images, which were looked upon by her family with superstitious reverence, as having some miraculous properties; but Jacob knew not that she had done so: he replied therefore, "With whomsoever thou findest thy images, let him not live: before thy assembled kindred see what is thine, and take it."

The tents of Jacob, and his servants, and family were searched for the stolen relics, but in vain; for Rachel had put them in her camel's furniture, and, feigning illness, continued to sit upon them. Then Jacob was angry, and rebuked his father-in-law for his injurious suspicions, and for his deceitful dealing. "These twenty years," he said, "have I been with thee; thy ewes and thy she-goats have not cast their young, and the rams of thy flocks have I not eaten. That which was torn of beasts I brought not unto thee; I bare the loss of it: of my hand didst thou require what was stolen by day or

night. In the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and sleep departed from mine eyes. Yet hast thou changed my wages ten times. Except God had been with me, surely thou hadst now sent me away empty. God hath seen my affliction and the labour of my hands, and rebuked thee yesternight."

Laban, confounded by this recrimination, entreated Jacob that they should establish a covenant of friendship, which he consenting to, they raised an altar to the Lord, afterwards called Galeed and Mizpah; and they offered a sacrifice there, and ate bread together in token of amity, and vowed solemnly to entertain no evil design the one towards the other. Then Laban kissed his daughters and their children, and departed—Jacob towards Canaan, and Laban towards Padan-aram.

Now Jacob in his way had to pass Mount Seir, in the land of Edom, where his brother Esau, from whom he fled more than twenty years before, had fixed his abode. His conscience told him that he deserved no kindness at his brother's hands, and, remembering Esau's threat to kill him, he was afraid. Jacob, however, was still a man of subtlety; and knowing the frank and manly disposition of his brother, he thought it practicable to propitiate him. So he sent forward messengers to Esau, commanding them to speak him fair, and inform him of Jacob's wealth and family, and to tender

him their own and their master's submission. The messengers however speedily returned, and informed Jacob that Esau was coming in person to meet him, attended by four hundred men.

Then Jacob was greatly troubled and distressed in mind, for he thought that Esau remembered the wrongs which had been done him, and intended to take vengeance. How much vexation and grief had the falsehood of Jacob already caused him to be afflicted with; but in order, as far as possible to be prepared for the worst, he divided his people, his flocks and herds, and camels, into two bands, reasoning thus: "If Esau come and smite the one company, the other may escape:" and Jacob prayed fervently unto God to be delivered from the anger of his brother.

Arrived at the Jordan, which, when he had passed twenty years before, his sole possession was his staff, he selected from among his now abundant riches a present for Esau—"Two hundred she-goats and twenty he-goats, two hundred ewes and twenty rams, thirty milch camels with their colts, forty kine and ten bulls, twenty she-asses, and ten foals:" and having given directions to his herdsmen, for their conduct at the approach of his brother, he went with his wives and children, his servants and flocks, over the river, at the ford Jabbok. And Jacob spent that night in earnest supplication—

"wrestling," or, as the expression is understood, communing in spirit with the Lord, who at day-break blessed him, and said, "Thy name shall no more be called Jacob, but Israel; for as a prince hast thou power with God and man, and hast prevailed."

Soon after the sun had risen, and the cavalcade was in motion, Jacob lifted up his eyes and beheld the troop of Esau; and he went forward and bowed himself to the earth seven times as his brother drew near. The humiliation was needless. Esau, whose anger had long since died away and been forgotten, ran to meet him, and, falling on his neck, kissed him, and wept; then raising his eyes he saw the women and children, and said, "Who are these with thee?"

Jacob answered, "The children whom God hath graciously given thy servant."

The wives, children, and servants of Israel then drew nigh and bowed themselves, in token of homage, to the hunter chief whom it was sought to propitiate. Esau, astonished at the number of flocks, and the wealth with which he found his brother surrounded, could scarcely believe that all were his. It was with difficulty, however, that he could be prevailed upon to accept a large present which Jacob pressed upon him. The elder-born of Isaac seemed to conceive that there would be somewhat of degradation in being indebted for aught to

his junior. His forgiveness of his brother, nevertheless, for the falsehoods formerly practised on him, appears to have been perfectly sincere. He harboured no resentment in his bosom; and if he remembered the injuries done him, he disdained to take vengeance. His nature was noble and manly; and, notwithstanding the forfeiture of inheritance which his obstinacy had incurred, it is scarcely possible to withhold sympathy from the excellent qualities which mingled with his defects. Instead of injuring Jacob, as the latter had feared, he offered to go before him as a protector; and when this was declined, on account of the slowness with which it was necessary to travel to avoid overdriving the tender flocks and the young children, he proposed to leave as a guard some of the strong and warlike men who had accompanied him from the country of Edom. Jacob, however, in all his intercourse with his brother, seems to have remained under the influence of his early deceitfulness. Having offended, he could not dispel the fear that vengeance would be taken on him, and he therefore suspected evil where none existed. This was a natural consequence of his own fraud and falsehood; and was the working of what has since been termed conscience. He entreated Esau to leave him, that he might pursue his way in peace. So Esau returned that day on his way to Mount Seir.

And Jacob journeyed onward by Succoth, where he tarried some time, and built a house and booths for his cattle, to Shalem, a city of Shechem in the land of Canaan, before which he encamped on parcel of a field which he purchased of the children of Hamor. There he erected an altar to Jehovah, and called it El-elohe-Israel; signifying that it was dedicated to the God of Israel, in acknowledgment of the mercy of the Lord in preserving him and his household from the dangers with which he had been beset.

From Shalem, Israel went, at the command of God, to Beth-el, and thence to Ephrath; where, in giving birth to her youngest child, who was called Benjamin, Rachel, the mother of Joseph and the beloved wife of Jacob, died. Then Jacob went to Isaac his father, at Mamre or Hebron. The old man had reached a hundred and fourscore years. He had long been sick and blind, and seemed only to have awaited the return of his absent son to yield back his spirit into the hands of his Maker. And Isaac was shortly afterwards gathered to his forefathers, and was buried by his two sons, with Abraham and Sarah, in the cave of Machpelah; and Jacob succeeded to the patriarchal power and possessions of the descendants of Abraham, in lieu of Esau his elder brother.

JACOB'S ALTAR AT SHALEM.

JOSEPH AND HIS BRETHREN.

JACOB now dwelt in the land of Canaan, and was exceedingly rich in flocks and herds, in man-servants and maid-servants; but the dissensions, violence, and dissolute lives of his sons vexed and grieved him sorely; insomuch that his affections were chiefly concentrated in his two younger children, Joseph and Benjamin, whose tender age, if not their better feelings, preserved them from vice and crime.

When Joseph was seventeen years old, his father sent him to the plain to feed the cattle with his brethren, whence he brought an evil report of their deeds; for he loved his father, and made a confidant of him; and he was rewarded with a coat of many colours, as a mark of distinction among his brethren and a token of his father's especial kindness and esteem. There was, henceforth, jealousy among the other sons of Jacob; who, finding that Joseph joined not in their proceedings, but carried home an account of their evil deeds, gradually grew to dislike him, and cared not to conceal, even in their speech, the hatred which they bore him.

And Joseph dreamed a dream, and told it to his brethren. "Behold," he said, "we were binding sheaves in the field, and, lo! my sheaf arose, and stood upright; while your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance to my sheaf."

His brethren when they heard this, hated him more than before, and said, in bitter derision, "Shalt thou indeed reign over us? or have dominion over us?"

And their anger was daily increased, and they would have wrought violence to him, but for the reverence which they still entertained towards their father.

Not long afterwards, Joseph dreamed again, and told his dream as before, to his father and his brethen, saying, "The sun, the moon, and the eleven stars, made obeisance to me."

On this occasion his father rebuked him: "What," he cried, "is this dream of thine? Shall I, and thy mother, and thy brethren, indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth?" But, notwithstanding his reproof, Jacob treasured in his mind the memory of his son's words; while the brothers of the dreamer waxed more and more wroth against him, and resolved to wreak on him their malice when they should find an opportunity.

After this, the sons of Israel went to feed their flocks in Shechem; and Jacob sent thither his son Joseph to see how they fared, and to bring him word as to their conduct. So

Joseph departed from the vale of Hebron, and wandered in the plain in search of his brethren; but found them not until he came to Dothan, a tract of country lying near the road by which merchants in those days journeyed to Egypt, to dispose of their commodities.

The sons of Jacob, seeing their brother afar off, and conjecturing his errand, conspired to kill him, saying, "Behold, this dreamer cometh! Let us slay him, and cast him into some pit. We can report that some evil beast hath devoured him; and we shall then see what will become of his dreams!"

Reuben, however, the eldest of Joseph's brethren, was less revengeful than the rest; and when he heard them deliberating on the commission of murder, his heart revolted from the crime, and he sought to deliver the lad from their hands.

"Let us not kill him," he said. "Shed no blood; but cast him into the pit that is in the wilderness." This he did, hoping to find an opportunity to restore Joseph to his father, before any mischief should befall him.

The brethren, conscious of the enormity of the crime they had meditated, paused when they saw that the conspiracy for the death of the favourite of their father was not unanimously approved, and the counsel of Reuben prevailed.

They stripped Joseph of his coat of many colours, and cast him into the pit which had been mentioned, which was a kind of well, having no water in it. Then they sat down to eat; and, while they spake together of what they had done, behold a company of Ishmeelites came from Gilead, with their camels, bearing spices, and balm, and myrrh, which they were carrying to sell in the rich cities of Egypt. When Judah saw this caravan of merchants, he said to his brothers—

"What will it profit us to slay our brother, and conceal his blood? Let us sell him to the Ishmeelites, that our hands may not be guilty towards our brother, who is of our flesh."

There needed little persuasion to this act of mitigated cruelty, which was preferable, as at once a relief from murder and a means of being certainly rid of the hated dreamer. They therefore accosted the merchants; and, drawing up Joseph from the pit, sold him for twenty pieces of silver, to be taken and disposed of in Egypt as a slave.

Reuben had been absent when this was done, and knew not that his brother had been removed from the pit; when he returned, therefore, he hastened to the place, hoping to release him, and send him home; but what was his agony to find that the lad had been removed! He rent his clothes, ented aloud; and, believing Joseph to have been

JACOB'S DAUGHTERS TRYING TO COMFORT HIM.

killed, he hastened to his brethren, exclaiming in despair, "The child is not; and I, whither shall I go?"

Those who had sold their brother then killed a kid of the goats, and, dipping the coat of many colours in the blood, sent it to their father with a deceitful message: "This have we found; know now whether it be thy son's coat or no."

The father too well knew the fatal mark of distinction which he had conferred on his beloved; and he exclaimed, "It is my son's coat; some evil beast hath devoured him: Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces." And Jacob rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his loins: and, believing his son to be dead, mourned for him many days, refusing to be comforted, though all his children, his sons, his daughters, the wives of his sons, and the maidens of his household, sought to console him for his bereavement. "I will go," he exclaimed, as one without hope, "I will go down to the grave unto my son mourning;" and the old man wept for his lost child.

Meanwhile, Joseph was taken by the merchants into Egypt, and sold in the slave-market there to Potiphar, the captain of King Pharaoh's guard; and the Lord was with the lad, and directed his steps, so that he became a prosperous man, and found grace in the sight of his master, who made him overseer, or superintendent of his household, placing all

that he had in the young Hebrew's care. Honest, thrifty, and industrious was Joseph, serving and obeying the God of his fathers, and degenerating not to the idolatry of the Egyptians, among whom he dwelt. So Jehovah blessed the house of Potiphar, for Joseph's sake, and increased his wealth in the city and the field; and Potiphar had such confidence in his overseer's zeal and fidelity, that he entrusted everything to his keeping, nor cared to inquire in what his substance consisted.

Now Joseph was handsome and well-favoured; and Potiphar's wife saw and loved Joseph, and would have tempted him to the commission of sin; but the young man refused to listen to her seductive blandishments, saying, "Behold, my master knoweth not what is with me in the house; but hath committed all that he hath to my hand: there is none greater in this house than I: he hath kept nothing from my control but thee, who art his wife. How, then, can I, by deceiving him and abusing his confidence, do the great wickedness thou hast desired, and thus sin against God?"

But the Egyptian woman would not, for this mild reproof, desist from her criminal entreaties. Day after day she urged Joseph; and at last, when she and the young man were alone together, she endeavoured to use constraint with him; but he from her, leaving, in his eagerness to escape, his gar-

POTIPHAR'S WIFE ACCUSING JOSEPH.

ment in her hand, with which she had striven to detain him. Thus disappointed in her purpose, and her heart filled with bitter vindictiveness against him, whom she had been unable to tempt to shame, she conceived and executed a base design of accusing him falsely to Potiphar, as having sought to do the injury which she had in vain solicited him to commit; and, in testimony of the fact, she produced the mantle which she had taken from Joseph.

When Potiphar heard this, his wrath was naturally kindled against the man who seemed, by betraying his confidence, to have returned him infamy for good; so, exercising the power which he possessed (and even this was lenient in comparison with what, under the arbitrary laws of Egypt, he might have done), he threw the innocent slave into prison, where the king's prisoners were confined: thus Joseph's merits, for wise purposes, led to his temporary punishment. The Lord, however, did not desert his servant, but caused him to find favour in the eyes of the keeper of the prison, who placed him in power over the other prisoners, and committed to his charge all that was done in the place: whatsoever was done there, Joseph was the doer of it, the keeper of the prison looked not to anything that was under his hand.

It happened, shortly after the incarceration of Joseph, that

the chief butler and the chief baker of the King of Egypt, having offended their sovereign, were cast into prison, and placed in the charge of the young Hebrew. And each of them dreamed a dream in the same night; and on the morrow they were sad and discomforted, from the impression which their dreams had left on their minds. Joseph, observing their melancholy, inquired it cause; for he was kind, and having known much of sorrow, was enabled to feel for the griefs of others. Then the chief butler told his dream.

"Behold," he said, "a vine was before me, which had three branches; and it was as though it budded, and shot forth blossoms, the clusters of which brought forth ripe grapes. Pharaoh's cup was in my hand: I took the grapes, therefore, and pressed them into the cup, and gave the cup into the king's hand."

When he had ended, Joseph thus interpreted the dream; being inspired with knowledge to do so from the God of Israel: "The three branches are three days. Yet three days and Pharaoh shall lift up thine head, and restore thee unto thy place; and thou shalt deliver Pharaoh's cup into his hand, as thou didst before when thou wast butler. Think on me when it shall be well with thee, and make mention of me to Pharaoh, in order to bring me out of this house; for

I was stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews, and have done nothing for which I ought to have been put into this dungeon."

The chief baker then related his dream; saying, "I had three white baskets on my head, in the uppermost of which there were all manner of bake-meats for Pharaoh; but the birds did eat them from out the basket."

"This," said Joseph, "is the interpretation of thy vision. The three baskets are three days. In three days shall Pharaoh lift thy head from off thee, and shall hang thee on a tree; and the birds shall come and eat the flesh from thy bones."

As Joseph predicted, so it befel. The third day was Pharaoh's birth-day, when he made a feast to all his servants, and brought forth from prison the chief baker and the chief butler; the latter of whom he restored to his office, and the former he caused to be hanged. But the chief butler did not remember Joseph according to his promise.

Two full years after this, it came to pass that Pharaoh dreamed. He stood by the river—the great Nile—and there issued from its waters seven well-favoured, fatted kine, which went to feed in a meadow. Then came up after them seven other kine, ill-favoured and lean, which stood by the first seven on the brink of the river; and presently the lean and ill-favoured kine fell upon and devoured their fat and well-

favoured neighbours: upon seeing which the king awoke. He slept again, however, and again he dreamed; and now seven ears of corn came up upon one stalk, strong and good; then presently three other ears, thin and blasted with the east wind, sprung up; and anon the seven thin ears devoured the full and ripe ears. These visions troubled Pharaoh. He sent, therefore, for the wise men and the magicians of Egypt; for in those days, divination was practised as an art by men trained from youth in secret learning, and who, by permission of the Almighty, were sometimes enabled to perform miracles: but no man was found who could interpret the king's dream.

The chief butler then for the first time remembered Joseph, and spake of him to Pharaoh, informing him of the interpretation of the dreams of the grapes and bake-meats. So the king sent for Joseph from the prison where he was bound; and when he was shaven and had changed his raiment, the youthful Hebrew seer stood in the court of the palace before the king. Pharaoh related his vision, adding, "I have told this unto the magicians, but there was none that could declare it to me. I have heard say of thee, that thou canst understand a dream to interpret it."

Joseph answered, "It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace. The dream of Pharaoh is one. God hath shewed the king what he is about to do. The seven

good kine are seven years, and the seven good ears are seven years. The seven thin and ill-favoured kine are also seven years, and the seven empty ears blasted with the east wind shall be seven years of famine. By this that I have spoken unto Pharaoh hath God shewn what He is about to do. Behold there come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt; and after them shall arise seven years of famine, in which all the plenty shall be forgotten in the land of Egypt. The famine shall consume the land; and the plenty shall not be remembered by reason of the grievous famine. Forasmuch as the dream was doubled, it is because God hath established his purpose, and will shortly bring it to pass. Let Pharaoh, therefore, look out a man discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt, to appoint officers over the land, and to take up the fifth part of the land during the seven plenteous years, so that all the food of those good years shall be gathered and laid up in the cities for store against the seven years of famine, that the land perish not."

The interpretation and counsel were acceptable to Pharaoh and his servants; and the king said "Can we find such an one as this—a man in whom is the Spirit of God?" Then addressing himself to Joseph, he added, "Forasmuch as God hath shewn thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art. Thou shalt be over my house, and according to

thy word shall all my people be ruled. In the throne only will I be greater than thou."

Joseph was accordingly set over all the land of Egypt; and Pharaoh took his ring from his own hand, and put it upon the hand of Joseph, and commanded that he should be arrayed in vestures of fine linen, and that a gold chain, as the symbol of his authority, should be put about his neck. A chariot also—second only to that in which Pharaoh himself rode—was given to Joseph, and he had servants and houses appropriated to his use, and when he went abroad heralds went before him crying, "Bow the knee." Thus Joseph, being then thirty years old, was made ruler over all the land of Egypt; and Pharaoh called him Zaphnath-paaneah, which signifies a saviour or expounder of secrets, and he gave him to wife Asenath the daughter of Poti-pherah, priest of On, one of the princes or great officers of the Egyptian realm.

The seven plenteous years soon commenced, and the earth brought forth in such abundance as had never before been known; till at last it was deemed by those who thought only of the passing moment, that the reign of plenty would endure for ever, and that there was little need to prepare for the coming time. Riot and luxurious living spread through the country, and corn and wine became things of little worth in estimating the riches that from all parts of the east flowed

into Egypt, where nature's stores seemed boundless and inexhaustible. Had it not been for the prudent precautions of Joseph, the waste throughout the land would have been equal to the wealth; but he, knowing the ordinance of the Lord, gathered all the surplus food of the seven years—collecting it even as the sand of the sea, till its quantity and worth became countless, and the officers appointed to garner the stores left numbering. Storehouses were erected in every part; the great pyramids which remain to this day, the marvel of travellers and objects of superstitious reverence to the natives of Egypt, and of the neighbouring countries, are supposed to have been then raised as granaries; and when buildings new and old failed to afford room, caverns and wells were sunk deep in the earth to contain the produce of those seven miraculous harvests. It was in these years, that Joseph was blessed with two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim.

And the seven years of plenty were ended. Then the seven years of dearth began. Drought, parching winds, blight, the wasting of the Nile, which no longer overflowed its banks as formerly to fertilize the earth—for the abundance of Egypt depends not as in most other countries upon rain, but upon the periodical overflow of the river—destroyed the seed in the earth, and the fields were barren, and the country being stripped of verdure resembled the sandy desert which

forms the boundary of the realm. The green grass, the fresh and fragrant herbs, the flowers, the shrubs, the trees, the climbing plants with their graceful tendrils, and delicious fruit, perished. Egypt became a vast wilderness; and famine usurped the place of plenty. So extensive and so sad was the dearth, that it was felt over the face of the whole earth.

It was then that the wisdom of Joseph was manifested. Of all known regions of the world, Egypt alone contained bread for its people; and they, reckless as they felt they had been, were famishing ere they could venture to appeal to Pharaoh to save them from the effects of their folly and extravagance. At length, however, a general cry arose for bread, and the king said to the Egyptians, "Go unto Joseph; what he saith unto you, do." So Joseph opened the store-houses and sold food to the starving multitudes—displaying therein such stores that rumours went forth through every land of the abundance of Egypt, insomuch that merchants came from far countries to purchase corn of Joseph.

The famine had extended to the land of Canaan, where the father and brethren of Joseph dwelt; and the old man was sorely distressed, and his sons were also sad, and looked with gloomy and foreboding eyes upon each other, as they saw day by day their stock of provisions decrease, and thought

how soon their household would be destitute. There was silence and solitude among them; and while they gazed at each other, and into their father's face, they sought to read the feelings that were passing in other bosoms than their own.

In this state of horrible anxiety and suspense, it was told Jacob that there was corn in Egypt. He instantly urged his sons to hasten thither, in order to procure sufficient food to keep the family alive. So the ten sons of Jacob—Benjamin the youngest, for fear some mischief should befall him, being left behind with his father—made ready and went with their servants and their beasts of burden into Egypt, where Joseph their brother, under his acquired name of Zaphnath-paaneah, ruled the whole country, and sold to all comers the corn which they sought.

The children of Israel being come to their brother, after the eastern custom, bowed before him with their faces to the earth. And Joseph saw and knew his brethren, but he made himself strange to them, and spake harshly to them in the Egyptian tongue, saying, "Whence come ye?"

The sons of Jacob, who knew not to whom they spoke, answered, "From the land of Canaan, to buy food."

Then Joseph, seeing them prostrate before him, remembered the dreams of his boyhood; but still he dissimulated, and said,

"Ye are spies. To see the nakedness of the land are ye come."

"Nay, my lord," replied the brethren; "to buy food alone are thy servants come. We are all the sons of one man; true men, and no spies."

Still Joseph charged them with criminal intentions, as having come with a design to see the misery and destitution of the country.

"Thy servants," they answered once again, "are twelve brethren, the sons of one man, in the land of Canaan; the youngest is this day with our father, and one is not."

"That is it," said Joseph, "concerning which I spake to you, saying, Ye are spies. Hereby ye shall be proved. By the life of Pharaoh, ye shall not go hence except your youngest brother come hither. Send one of you, and let him fetch your brother, while ye remain in prison, that your words may be proved whether there be any truth in you; else I shall deem ye but as spies."

The sons of Jacob were confounded at these words; and being unable to answer, were conducted to prison, where they were kept for three days; at the end of which they were again brought before Joseph who thus addressed them, "This do, and live: for I fear God:—If ye be true men, let one of your brethren continue bound in prison, while ye go and carry

corn to appease the famine of your houses. But bring your youngest brother unto me; so that, your words being verified, ye may not die."

Then said the brethren of Joseph one to another in their own language, "We are verily guilty concerning our brother, whose anguish of soul we saw, and whose entreaties we heard without being moved to compassion. It is for that crime that this distress has come upon us."

And Reuben, who had desired to be merciful to Joseph, said, "Spake I not to you, saying, Do not sin against the child? But ye would not hear. Behold now, therefore, his blood is required."

The brethren knew not, while they thus discoursed in presence of the governor of Egypt, that he understood them; for he had spoken to them by an interpreter; but he, feeling, notwithstanding their former unkindness, that they were his brothers, and rejoicing to have seen them again after his long separation, and to have gained tidings of his father and of his brother Benjamin, was compelled to turn from them to conceal the tears which flowed fast down his cheeks; and when he had in some degree recovered his composure, he returned to them, and communed with them again, and finally took from them Simeon, and cast him into prison as a hostage for their return with Benjamin.

Then Joseph commanded his officers to fill the sacks of the

Hebrews with corn, to restore every man's money into his sack, and to supply them with abundant provision for the way. So their asses were laden with corn, and they departed on their homeward journey.

As they travelled, one of them opening his sack to give his ass provender at an inn, espied his money, which had been placed in his sack's mouth: and he was afraid, and informed his brethren of what he had found. Then their hearts sunk within them, and their conscience was burdened with the offence they had wrought long before. "What is this," they exclaimed, despondingly, "that God hath done unto us?" And terror fell upon them every one.

They hastened therefore to their father's house in the land of Canaan, and told him all that had befallen them—what the lord of the country had said and done to them, and how they had answered his inquiries. But how were their fears and their astonishment increased when, on opening the remainder of their sacks, it was found that every man had brought back with him the price of his corn; even Jacob's heart was smitten, and he thus vented its fullness: "Me have ye bereaved of my children: Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye would take Benjamin away also!"

Then Reuben answered, "Slay my two sons if I bring him not unto thee again."

But Jacob said, "My son shall not go down with you. His brother is dead and he is left alone. If mischief befall him by the way, then shall ye bring down my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave."

The dreadful famine continued throughout the land. Man and beast were perishing with hunger, and the children and household of Israel had soon consumed all the corn they had procured from Egypt. Then Jacob said to his sons, "Go again: buy us a little food."

But Judah spake to his father, saying, "The man did solemnly protest unto us that we should not see his face, except our brother were with us. If thou wilt send our brother, therefore, we will go down and buy food; but if thou wilt not send him, we will not go down."

"Ah! wherefore," exclaimed the aged, agonized parent, "wherefore dealt ye so ill with me, as to tell the man that ye had yet a brother?"

"The man," answered they, "asked us strictly of our state and of our kindred; whether our father were yet alive, and if we had another brother; and we told him according to the tenor of his words; for we could not certainly know that he would say, Bring your brother down."

"Send the lad with me," interrupted Judah, "and we will arise and go, that we may live, and not die; both we, and

thou, and all our little ones. I will be surety for him: of my hand shalt thou require him. If I bring him not unto thee, and set him before thee, then let me bear the blame for ever. Had we not unnecessarily lingered," he added, "we should even now have returned a second time."

Then Jacob said, "If it must be so, do this:—take of the best fruits of the land in your vessels, and carry the man a present; a little balm and honey, spices and myrrh, nuts and almonds; and take double money in your hands, and the money that was brought again in the mouths of your sacks: peradventure it was an oversight. Take also your brother, and arise, go again unto the man, and God Almighty give you mercy, that he may send away your other brother and Benjamin. If I be bereaved of my children, I am bereaved."

It was a solemn parting, that of the venerable patriarch with his youngest-born, the only remaining pledge of the love of his dead Rachael; and the occasion made it still more impressive. Famine and desolation stalked through the land, and man had no refuge, save that which had been prepared by Providence in Egypt; where, as if in mockery of pride and vainglory, all had to submit to a lawless despotism, tempered only in its operation by the sense of justice and the fear of God, which actuated him to whom the sovereign power had, for the

time being, been delegated. Simeon was there in prison; doubts, difficulties, and fear had arisen concerning the mysterious return of the brethren's money; and the demand for Benjamin could not but have appeared extraordinary. With heavy hearts, therefore, the sons of Jacob wended again to Egypt, for more corn.

Joseph, it may well be conceived, waited with impatient anxiety for the return of his brethren; and when they stood again in his presence, with Benjamin in the midst of them, his bosom heaved with joy. "Bring these men home," he said to the ruler of his household, "and slay and make ready, for they shall dine with me at noon."

But, when the brethren were bidden to the governor's house, their terror increased. "It is," they said, "because of the money that was returned in our sacks, that we are brought in; that he may seek occasion against us, to take us for bondsmen, and to strip us of all we possess."

They went, therefore, to Joseph's steward, and spake to him at the door of the house, saying, "Sir, we came before to buy food, and, when we opened our sacks at the inn, lo! every man's money, in full weight, was in the mouth of his sack. We cannot tell who put the money in our sacks, but have brought it again, with the other money, to buy food."

"Peace be to you," answered the steward; "Fear not.

Your God, the God of your fathers, hath given you treasure in your sacks: I had your money."

And Simeon was brought forth to his brethren; and the men entered the house of Joseph together, and received the customary hospitality of the East.

At noon, when Joseph returned from his duties, his brethren placed before him the present their father had sent, and bowed themselves before him to the earth. Then he asked them of their welfare, and said, "Is your father, the old man of whom ye spake, yet alive?"

"He is in good health," they answered, prostrating themselves.

"Is this your younger brother, of whom ye spake to me?" inquired Joseph, seeing his brother Benjamin; "God be gracious unto thee, my son!" he added, scarcely able to restrain the tears of affection which arose to his eyes. Indeed his feelings overpowered his assumption of stern indifference, so that he was compelled to hasten from the apartment and enter his private chamber to weep there. Soon recovering his composure, however, he washed his face and returned to dine with his brethren, who sat before him, the first-born according to his birth-right, and the youngest according to his youth;—Joseph being served at a table by himself, his Egyptian officers by themselves, and the sons of Jacob by

themselves; for they might not dine together, because, in the superstition of the country, it would have been an offence for Egyptians to have eaten with Hebrews. To do honour, nevertheless, to his brethren, Joseph sent the most delicate viands to their table, taking care that the portion of Benjamin was of five times the value of any of the rest.

When the feast was over, Joseph ordered the men's sacks to be refilled with food, and every man's money to be again put into his sack; "and put my cup," he added, "the silver cup, into the sack's mouth of the youngest, together with his corn money." All which was done according to the commandment of the viceroy, who wished, perhaps, by this expedient, to ascertain what were the feelings of his brethren towards his brother Benjamin.

In the morning, the brethren arose with the light, and departed to return to their father. But ere they were far from the city, a messenger overtook them and charged them with rewarding evil for good, and with taking the silver cup which the ruler of Egypt used for divination—a charge to which they in great consternation replied, "Wherefore saith my lord so? The money which we found in our sacks we brought again out of the land of Canaan. How then should we steal out of my lord's house silver or gold? With

whomsoever of thy servants it be found, let him die, and we also will be my lord's bondmen."

"Be it," replied the messenger, "according to your words. He with whom it is found shall be condemned as a slave; but ye shall be blameless."

So every man took down and opened his sack, and search was made, proceeding from the eldest to the youngest, when the cup was found in the sack of Benjamin. Then the brethren rent their clothes, and every man reladed his ass, and they returned despairingly to the city, to the house of Joseph, before whom they fell on their knees to the ground.

"What is this," angrily exclaimed Joseph, "that ye have done? Know ye not that such a man as I can certainly divine, and thus obtain knowledge of hidden things?"

"We know not," answered Judah, "what to say unto my lord, or how to clear ourselves. God hath revealed the iniquity of thy servants; for we are thy servants—we and he with whom the cup hath been found.

"Nay," replied Joseph, "God forbid that I should do so. The man in whose hand the cup was found shall be my servant: but for you—get you in peace unto your father."

"Oh! my lord, cried Judah, agonized with conflicting emotions, "let thy servant, I pray thee, speak, and be not

MARTIN, PX. GEN. xliv. 12. RAGG, SC.

THE CUP FOUND IN BENJAMIN'S SACK.

thou angry; for thou art even as Pharaoh. My lord asked his servants if we had a father or a brother, and we answered, We have a father, an old man, and a child of his old age, a little one, whose brother is dead, and who is left alone of his mother; for which cause his father loveth him. And when thou desiredest us to bring the lad hither, we said, If he leave his father the old man would die; yet thou didst not hearken to us, but commanded us to see thy face no more except our youngest brother came with us. All this told we to our father, who said, Ye know that my wife bare me two sons; the one of whom went from me and hath not since been seen, wherefore, I said, He is surely torn in pieces. If ye take this also from me, and mischief befall him, ye shall bring down my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave. Now, therefore, my lord, when I come to my father, and the lad be not with us—seeing that his life is bound up in the lad's life—he will surely die; and we shall bring down the grey hairs of our father with sorrow to the grave. Thy servant became surety for the lad to my father, and must bear the blame for ever, if I restore him not to the old man again. Now, therefore, my lord, let thy servant abide a bondman instead of the lad, and let him return with his brethren. I cannot go up to my father if the lad be not with me; lest I see the evil which shall come upon my father."

While Judah thus simply related this domestic story, and pleaded for the liberty of his youngest brother, Joseph was unable to conceal the deep feelings by which he was agitated; but when the tale was ended, his tears gushed forth. "'Cause every man of my household," he said, with a broken and stifled voice, "to go from me." Then being alone with his brethren, he made himself known to them and wept aloud, so that the Egyptians heard. "I am Joseph," he cried, in the Hebrew tongue; "doth my father yet live?"

But his brethren were so troubled at his presence that they could not answer.

"Come near me, I pray you," resumed the lost kinsman; "I am Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt. Be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, for God sent me before you, to preserve life. Two years hath the famine been in the land, and for five years to come there shall neither be earing nor harvest. It was not you, therefore, that sent me hither, but God; who hath made me as a father to Pharaoh, the lord of his house, and a ruler throughout the land of Egypt. But haste ye, go up to my father, and say, Thus saith thy son, Joseph; come down to me, tarry not; for thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and be near to me, thou, thy children, and thy children's children; and I will nourish thee during [illegible] of famine which are to come. Ye can testify

that your eyes, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin, have seen that it is with my mouth, in your own language, that I have spoken to you; and ye shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that ye have seen. Hasten, therefore, and bring my father hither."

Then he fell on his brother Benjamin's neck and wept, and Benjamin wept on his neck. He afterwards embraced all his brethren, and talked with them of what had mutually befallen them since their separation. That was a day of joy and thanksgiving in the house of Joseph.

It was soon rumoured in the palace of Pharaoh that Joseph's brethren were with him, and Pharaoh and his officers were well pleased; and the king confirmed the words of Joseph, and bade his brethren hasten to bring down their father and their families, saying, "Regard not your substance, for all the land of Egypt is yours."

Ere his brethren departed, however, Joseph gave to each of them changes of raiment, and to Benjamin three hundred pieces of silver and five changes. He, moreover, sent to his father ten asses laden with the good things of Egypt, and ten she-asses bearing corn and provisions, besides waggons to convey the women and children. Then he strictly charged his brethren, whose disposition had been known to him of old,

"See that ye fall not out by the way:" and he sent them forth to go on their glad errand to the land of Canaan.

Jacob's heart had misgiven him from the moment that his sons departed. He felt, perhaps, that as he had deceived his father and supplanted his brother in his youth, the Lord was exacting sacrifices for his treachery now that he was old; and he mourned in silence and solitude, and prayed that his forebodings might not be verified. But, lo! his sons are returned, and Benjamin and Simeon are restored to him! The old man's heart is full, and he is offering thanks to the God of his fathers. And hark! there is mirth and music among the household of Israel; dancing and festal sounds in the midst of desolation, as if the earth still produced its increase, and the harvest-time had come again with its fruits and fulness. Glad tidings have released the soul of song; and glee has succeeded to sadness, in all breasts save that of the patriarch, who has never forgotten his lost son, nor the innocent gaiety with which he was wont to beguile the hours of twilight. Yet joy is now in store for him.

"Know," said his sons, after preparing the old man for strange and unexpected news, "our brother Joseph is yet alive. It is he who is governor of all the land of Egypt!"

THE MEETING OF JACOB AND JOSEPH.

Jacob's heart throbbed wildly for a moment, but soon sank to sickness, for he believed them not; but when they told him the words of their brother, and shewed him the presents which Joseph had sent, and led him by the hand to see the waggons, with their Egyptain drivers, which awaited the removal of the house of Israel, his spirit revived, and he exclaimed with tranquil rapture, "It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive; I will go and see him before I die."

The few necessary arrangements for the journey were soon made; and Israel and his children departed to go to Egypt, with their cattle, their goods, and all the wealth which they had gotten in the land of Canaan. Threescore and six souls, besides women, formed the company—all of the lineage of Jacob—numbering, with Joseph and his two sons, and Jacob himself, a family of seventy persons. And Judah went before his brethren to Joseph, to obtain directions concerning their resting-place in Goshen; since, being shepherds, it would have given offence to the Egyptians to settle them in the immediate territory of the regal city—shepherds being held in abomination by the natives.

Joseph being informed of his father's approach, made ready his chariot, and went to Goshen, which is without the walls of the royal city of the Egyptian kings, to meet the old man; and he fell on his neck and wept there; for it was as if they

had been restored to each other from the dead. And Jacob said, "Now let me die, since I have seen thy face—that thou art yet alive."

Then five of the brethren of Joseph were presented to Pharaoh, and were made overseers of the king's cattle; and afterwards Jacob was brought into the monarch's presence, and he blessed Pharaoh for the kindness that had been shewn to his son. And the king talked with the patriarch, and asked concerning his age; when Israel replied, "The days of the years of my pilgrimage are a hundred and thirty. Few and evil have they been; and I have not attained unto the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage."

The brethren and the father of Joseph were settled in the best of the land of Egypt, in the land of Rameses, part of which was given them for a possession; and they had food while many perished of hunger. It was the special providence of the Almighty which had preserved them, through the instrumentality of Joseph. Even the Egyptians were compelled to yield to Pharaoh all their gold and silver, their horses, their asses, their flocks and their herds, and finally their lands, and their personal freedom and that of their children, to purchase food; while the sons of Israel were nurtured in the land of Goshen, and wanted for nothing that the country

could supply; increasing, meanwhile, from year to year, in numbers, in property, and in wealth.

Seventeen years lived Jacob in the land of Egypt; and when the time of his death drew nigh, he called to him his son Joseph, and took from him an oath that he would not suffer his (Jacob's) bones to be buried in Egypt, but that they should be taken to the land of Canaan, to repose beside those of Abraham and Isaac, and their wives, in the cave of Macpelah, before Hebron.

Then Jacob grew sick, and his eyes were dim with age, so that he could not see; and Joseph hearing thereof, took with him his children, Manasseh and Ephraim, and went and sat upon his father's bed; and the old man blessed him, and adopted his two sons, saying, "They are mine; as Reuben and Simeon, they shall be mine. Bring them, I pray thee, unto me, that I may bless them." Joseph accordingly led them to his father; and Jacob kissed and embraced them, saying to his son, "I had not thought to have seen thy face, and, lo! God hath shewn me also thy seed." He then stretched out his right hand and laid it upon the head of Ephraim, the youngest, and his left hand upon that of Manasseh; guiding them carefully, as if to defeat the precaution of Joseph, who had placed his eldest-born at his father's right hand. But when Joseph saw that, he exclaimed, "Not so, my

father; this is my first-born, put thy right hand on his head." Jacob, however, refused, saying, "I know it, my son; I know it. He, also, shall become a people, and shall be great; but his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his posterity shall become a multitude of nations." Then he blessed the lads, and said, "God make thee as Ephraim and as Manasseh." Thus the sons of Joseph became heads of families and chiefs of tribes, the younger ranking before the elder, as he had been named in the prophetic blessing with which Jacob had endowed them.

Not long afterwards Israel called to him all his sons, for his strength failed him, and he felt the hour of his departure nigh; and he blessed them with a blessing, which foreshadowed what should befall their several progeny, after he himself should sleep in the tomb; and having again given it in charge to bury him in the land of Canaan, he gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded his spirit into the hands of his Maker; and Joseph fell upon his father's face, and wept upon and kissed him. And he commanded his Egyptian physicians, who were skilful in the art of embalming, to embalm his father; which being done, and the days of mourning accomplished (an observance which was kept by the children of Israel for forty, and by the Egyptians, as for a prince of their own race, for seventy days), the bones of Jacob were taken by

JACOB BLESSING HIS SONS.

his sons, by the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of the king's house, and all the elders of Egypt, accompanied with chariots and horsemen, to the cave of Macpelah, before Mamre, in the land of Canaan, and there buried. It was a great company that went to do honour to the father of Joseph; and the inhabitants of the places through which the procession passed, spoke of it long afterwards as "a grievous mourning to the Egyptians." The full years of the life of Jacob were a hundred and forty-seven.

In evidence of the force of conscience, and the duration of guilty fears, it is recorded, that when their father was dead the brethren of Joseph were once more alarmed lest he, whom they had sold into slavery, should now requite them for all the evil they had done him; and they sent a messenger in the name of their father, and of the God whose servants they mutually were, to implore his forgiveness and protection. This was a humiliation; and Joseph, feeling that it was so, not less to them than to him, who could be suspected of having dealt with duplicity during the life of his father, in order to take a base revenge after so many years of apparent kindness and confidence, wept while the messenger spoke to him. To convince them, however, that he was incapable of entertaining an unworthy design, he sent for them to his house, and re-assured them by words and acts

saying, "Fear not. Am I in the place of God to punish or forgive? Though ye thought evil against me, God meant it unto good; to save, as in this day, much people alive. Fear not, therefore; I will nourish you and your little ones."

And Joseph did in all things according to his word. So the children of Israel grew and multiplied exceedingly, till the land of Goshen, whereon they dwelt, was filled with them, their servants, their cattle, and their goods. Joseph himself lived to see the descendants of his son Ephraim, of the third generation; and those of the son of Manasseh were brought up in his house. But, when Joseph was a hundred and ten years old, he felt that the time of his death was come. He took an oath, therefore, of his brothers and his children that when, in his good time, God should restore them to the land of Canaan, they would carry thither his bones; in order that they might be buried with those of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: and, having yielded up the ghost, he was embalmed and put into a coffin, according to the manner of wealthy and noble Egyptians; but, instead of being buried, his body was consigned to the custody of the elders among the children of Israel.

THE ISRAELITES IN EGYPT.

WHEN Joseph, and Pharaoh, who had made him governor of Egypt, were dead, and the generation that had witnessed the wisdom by which the state had been preserved, during the terrible famine, had passed away, the memory of the miracles wrought by the God of Israel gradually became obscure, and was at last regarded as a superstition; which if not wholly false in its origin, had at least been rendered more marvellous in its descent through a long course of years.

The king who had succeeded to the throne of Pharaoh had no knowledge of Joseph nor his deeds; and as the children of the good viceroy had attached themselves to the race of their father, and had not mingled with the princes of Egypt, among whom they were born, and with whom they might have occupied a place in the councils of the kingdom, there was no tie between the foreign inhabitants of Goshen and the Egyp-

tians. The latter, therefore, seeing the rapid increase of the Hebrews, became jealous of their power, and feared that eventually they would be able to supplant the aboriginal inhabitants. Even the king partook of these fears of his subjects, and argued thus with his ministers: "The people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we. Let us deal wisely with them, therefore, lest they multiply, and when there falleth out a war, they unite with our enemies and fight against us."

Accordingly, in order to afflict the Israelites, and to prevent their growth, task-masters were appointed, to compel them to labour as slaves, for the king; and they worked as builders, and built for him the treasure-cities of Pithom and Rameses. Nevertheless, the more they were oppressed the more numerous they became. It seemed in vain that the Egpytians exacted the most rigorous services, and made the lives of the children of Israel bitter with hard bondage; both in making bricks, in building, and in field service, the Lord was with his chosen people, and caused them to prosper in spite of all human efforts to prevent them.

When the new king, whose name, like that of several of his predecessors, was Pharaoh, saw that his harsh measures were unavailing to depress the Israelites, he published a decree, that every male child, which should be born of Hebrew

parents, should be immediately destroyed. For a time this cruel law was evaded; but Pharaoh grew furious, and adopted the strictest precautions for the enforcement of his will; so that, eventually, many innocent children were thrown into the Nile, and perished.

While this law was in operation, Jochebed, the wife of Amram, of the family of Levi, had a son; a strong and beautiful child, whose birth she was enabled, for three months, to conceal from all the searchers; but at the end of that time she could no longer hide her infant, and, submitting to dreadful necessity, she made an ark, or covered basket of bulrushes, and daubing it with slime and pitch, so as to exclude the water, she put the child therein, and, ere the morning had broke, laid it in the flags by the river's brink. It may be thought how agonized a mother's heart would be, to part with her young babe; to lay him where the green crocodile might come and devour him, or the tide rise and bear him away to die amid the weltering waters. The mother wept, and returned to her dwelling to mourn her loss in secret; but she had a daughter who was grown up, and this maiden watched at a distance, on the bank of the river, to see what should become of the infant.

It came to pass in the morning, that the king's daughter, with her train of female attendants, came to the place to bathe;

and seeing the ark among the rushes, it was fetched, and the desolate child found therein,

> "———Smiling in his tears,
> As when, along a little mountain lake,
> The summer south-wind breathes with gentle sigh,
> And parts the reeds, unveiling, as they bend,
> A water-lily, floating on the wave."

The princess, although she knew that the babe must be a child of the Hebrews, had compassion on its helpless innocence, and calling to her its sister, who had now drawn nigh, bade her call a Hebrew nurse, to tend it. The maid hastened and brought the babe's mother; to whom the daughter of Pharaoh confided her foundling, saying, "Take the child and nurse it for me, and I will give thee wages." So the mother, with ill-repressed joy, took her infant son home again, and nurtured him with the utmost tenderness. This child was named by Pharaoh's daughter, Moses, which means "drawn forth;" because he had been snatched from destruction in the river. And the princess adopted the child; and when he was able to walk took charge of him, and caused him to be educated by the priests and wise men, in all the mysterious learning, the arts and divinations, which were taught in the temples and schools of Egypt. But Moses had been taught the secret of his parentage by his mother, and his affections

clave to his own race and kindred; and he looked with sorrow and bitterness on the oppression of his countrymen.

It happened when Moses was grown, that as he walked amid the Israelites, musing on their burdens, he beheld a savage task-master applying the lash to one of his unfortunate slaves; and the wrath of the young Hebrew foundling was kindled, and, having ascertained that none but the beaten man was nigh, he rushed upon the Egyptian, whom he slew and buried in the sand. In barbarous countries such events are not uncommon, and the loss of a man occasions little public inquiry. Moses, consequently, was not unreasonable in hoping that his crime would escape detection, seeing that it was as much the interest of the slave, whom he had delivered, as his own, to conceal the murder. But when he a second time went among his brethren, and reproved two Hebrews whom he saw quarelling, he became convinced that he had reckoned too much on secrecy, for he was answered with a bitter taunt: "Who made thee a prince and judge over us? Wilt thou kill us as thou didst the Egyptian?" Then he was stricken with fear, saying, "Surely the thing is known," and he fled towards the great desert; not unnecessarily, for Pharaoh, having heard what he had done, sought to put him to death.

It was the special providence of the Almighty that preserved

Moses from his infancy, and which, even in the strange land where he now sought refuge, raised him a friend and protector, in a priest named Jethro; who gave the fugitive his daughter Zipporah to wife, and made him the keeper of his flocks in Midian. The Lord had a high mission in reserve for the foundling; and it was here, on the borders of the wilderness, by Mount Horeb, where He chose to reveal His presence. As the young man was tending the cattle of his father-in-law, the angel of God appeared to him in a flame of fire, issuing from a bush, which, though it burned, was not consumed; and as Moses drew nigh to see, the voice of the Lord from the midst of the bush called to him, saying, "Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. I am the God of thy father; the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob"

Then Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon the divine manifestation. But the Lord encouraged and comforted him, and declared that He had chosen him to be a special messenger to Pharaoh, and to be the instrument through which the children of Israel should be released from their grievous bondage. The Lord further declared that, as a
to Pharaoh, to the Egyptians, and to the Israelites
lves of the truth of his mission, many miracles and

THE ROD OF MOSES TURNED INTO A SERPENT.

wonders should be wrought in the earth, by the hand of Moses. As a surety that it was indeed the Lord that spake to him, Jehovah commanded him to cast his shepherd's rod on the ground, and when he had done so it became a serpent; and Moses fled from it.

The Lord then said, "Put forth thine hand, and take it by the tail."

And when Moses obeyed, the serpent again became a rod.

God gave him also another sign; rendering his hand leprous and sound again, by merely placing it twice in his bosom. But Moses was still desirous of renouncing his high office, till the Lord joined with him Aaron, his elder brother, born in Egypt before the enforcement of the law which ordained the destruction of all Hebrew male children; an eloquent man, and one zealous to serve God. Then Moses, relying on the promised assistance, no longer delayed, but returned to Jethro his father-in-law, and solicited permission to return to Egypt, with his wife, and a son named Gershom, who had been born to him in Midian; and Jethro said, "Go in peace." Moses, however, sometime afterwards sent back his wife and child, together with a second son, named Eliezer, to his father-in-law, their presence interfering with his new duties.

As he journeyed by Horeb, the mount of God, Moses was met by Aaron, who, directed to that end by the Almighty,

had come forth to welcome his brother, and to bear part in his divine errand. And when Moses had informed him of all that the Lord had said, and of his signs and tokens, and the promises of certain deliverance which He had made in behalf of the children of Israel, Aaron hastened and gathered together the people, that they might hear and rejoice at the salvation which drew nigh. Bright were the words of hope and of freedom then uttered; and the Hebrews were blessed in believing.

When the demand for liberty, however, was made to the king (not that Pharaoh who had sought to slay Moses, for he was dead; but his successor, a stranger to the murder of the Egyptian), the monarch, in pride and indignation, exclaimed, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice, to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go."

The Egyptians, it should be borne in mind, were idolaters; worshipping many imaginary divinites, under names conferred by the priesthood, expressive of powers and attributes assigned to the sun, the moon, the stars, to certain animals, and even to reptiles, rivers, trees, and plants. Everything, indeed, animate and inanimate, save only the living God, was to them as a deity. Pharaoh, therefore, said truly that he knew not the Lord; and his vainglory and obstinacy were such, as to hold him in ignorance till the day of his death. Instead of

liberating the captive Hebrews, he increased their burdens; requiring them not only to accomplish their customary tasks, within the stated time, but to collect and furnish materials for the purpose; and when the children of Israel could no longer perform the amount of labour required from them, their elders were beaten and otherwise punished, for neglecting to use sufficient severity in the execution of their odious office.

Then the Israelites, seeing that these additional grievances had been brought upon them by the demands of Moses and Aaron for their release, murmured exceedingly, and reproached their advocates as having caused them to be abhorred in the eyes of Pharaoh and the Egyptians, and thus put a sword into the hands of the enemy. And Moses repined before the Lord, because of the complainings of the people. Jehovah, who foreknew what the king would do and say, but who designed to manifest his power in the sight of his chosen people, in order that they might for ever afterwards adore and celebrate His name as their deliverer, and become a means of bringing back the whole earth from dark superstition, to the worship of the one true God, now sent his servant to Pharaoh, with command to effect a miracle in his presence; that the monarch, who had become a god to himself and his subjects, might see that there lived and reigned a mightier than he;

and that the Hebrews might believe in the certainty of their deliverance.

So Moses and Aaron stood again before the Egyptian king, and, in the name of the Most High, demanded that the children of Israel might be allowed to depart. But Pharaoh scoffed at, and made light of their words. Then Aaron, at his brother's bidding, cast his rod on the ground, and it became a serpent. Still Pharaoh was not convinced; but, believing what he saw to be the effect only of that sorcery which was taught as an art in the secret schools of Egypt, he sent for the priests and magicians of his own religion, that they, by performing the same wonders, might discredit the mission of the Hebrew Levites. And the sorcerers of Egypt, at the instigation of their king, were enabled by some illusive trick, or by the special aid of the Lord, for His own wise purposes, to do even as Aaron had done. When their rods, however, had been turned into serpents, the latter were all swallowed by that of Aaron. Pharaoh, nevertheless (influenced, perhaps, by the counsel of the enchanters in his service), still hardened his heart, and refused to obey the voice of God.

The Lord then commanded Moses and Aaron to perform other miracles, in the sight of the Egyptians and of their sovereign; that they might know the true God, and confess that he was the sole source of power, and supreme ruler

of the universe. So His chosen servants returned, and the waters of the Nile having been smitten with the miraculous rod, the river was turned into blood; insomuch that the fish therein died, and the waters stank so that the people could no longer use them, but were compelled to dig wells in the neighbourhood of the stream, to satisfy their thirst. Still Pharaoh relented not in his stern purpose, of holding the Israelites in bondage.

Next the rivers, the pools, and the brooks, throughout Egypt, were made to bring forth frogs, which swarmed in every dwelling; even in the palace, the bedchamber, nay on the very bed of the king; and in the ovens, the kneading-troughs, and among the food of the Egyptians, as well as in the streets and the fields; making life itself loathsome, and all nature hideous. Pharaoh was now startled at the pestilence with which he and his people were afflicted, and promised that if the curse were withdrawn, he would let the children of Israel go to offer sacrifice to their God. But when, at the intercession of Moses, the frogs died, and the king saw that there was a respite, his obstinacy returned, and he refused to perform his part of the stipulation.

The third plague brought upon the Egyptians was that of converting the dust of the ground into lice, which infested man

and beast, and rendered them objects of disgust to themselves; the vermin being so numerous that it was impossible to destroy, or even sensibly to diminish them. The previous acts of Moses and Aaron had been imitated by the magicians; but at this point their power ceased. From the dust of the ground the Lord had originally made man, and all living things. In the sacrilegious attempt to set his power at nought, by imitating one of the sublime acts of creation, He rendered His creatures impotent. The sorcerers then exclaimed, "This is, indeed, the finger of God!" But Pharaoh was not yet sufficiently humbled.

Swarms of flies afterwards arose, filling and corrupting the air with their numbers,—except in the land of Goshen, where there were none,—until Pharaoh again promised to let the Israelites depart. But again he acted deceitfully, and paid no heed to his plighted word.

Fifthly, a grievous murrain infected the horses, the asses, the camels, the oxen, and the sheep of Pharaoh, and of the Egyptian people; and all their cattle died; while of the cattle belonging to the children of Israel there died not one.

Sixthly, there was a plague of boils and blains upon man and beast: every man was afflicted with noisome and offensive

sores; even the magicians of Egypt were unable to stand before Pharaoh, because of the pestilential boils with which they were covered.

Then there was a plague of thunder and hail throughout the land, such as had never been witnessed in Egypt from the establishment of the kingdom. Thick flakes of fire ran, with volleying roar, along the ground, and hissed amid the waters; and the hail, mingling with the fire, smote and destroyed all that was in the field or by the way-side, and brake every tree and shrub throughout the land. The flax and the barley were consumed; but the wheat and the rye were spared, because they were not yet grown. Every man and beast that was unsheltered that day, died amid the fury of the devastating tempest: none were left alive, save those who had sought refuge in their habitations at the warning of Moses and Aaron, and such as were among the Hebrews in the land of Goshen, where there was no storm.

But further signs and miracles were still necessary. Swarms of locusts were called forth at God's command. A day and a night was the air filled to blackness with the insect armies, which covered the whole face of Egpyt; making it one mass of living torment. Every herb, every leaf, every blade of grass and green thing, and all the fruit of the trees and vines, did the locusts devour—all, indeed, that the hail and thunder had

left. The ground could not be seen for them, and at every step taken in the temples, the royal palaces, or in private houses, they were crushed beneath the foot by hundreds. Never were such locusts seen in the devoted land. Yet again at the prayer of Moses, the Lord was merciful; and He sent a strong west wind, which swept away every locust into the Red Sea: not one was left within compass of the Egyptian coasts. Nevertheless the king once more hardened his heart, and refused to let his bondmen go.

The ninth plague was one of darkness on the land of Egypt, for three days and three nights; not the ordinary darkness of night, but thick, murky, terrible blackness; oppressing and rendering palpable to touch and taste the unwholesome atmosphere; a darkness that might be felt, and under which, though respiration was not entirely impeded, but went on slowly and painfully, no light could be kept burning; so that the Egyptians could not see each other, nor even themselves, during the continuance of that fearful pause of nature. Yet, during the whole of that period, the children of Israel had light in their dwellings. Then Pharaoh, awe-stricken at the marvels which the Lord had wrought, endeavoured to effect a compromise for the departure of the Israelites; and, when Moses and Aaron refused to disobey the commands of the Almighty, he said to them, "Get ye from me. Take

heed to yourselves; see my face no more: for in the day that ye see my face ye shall die."

And Moses answered, "Thou hast spoken well. I will see thy face no more."

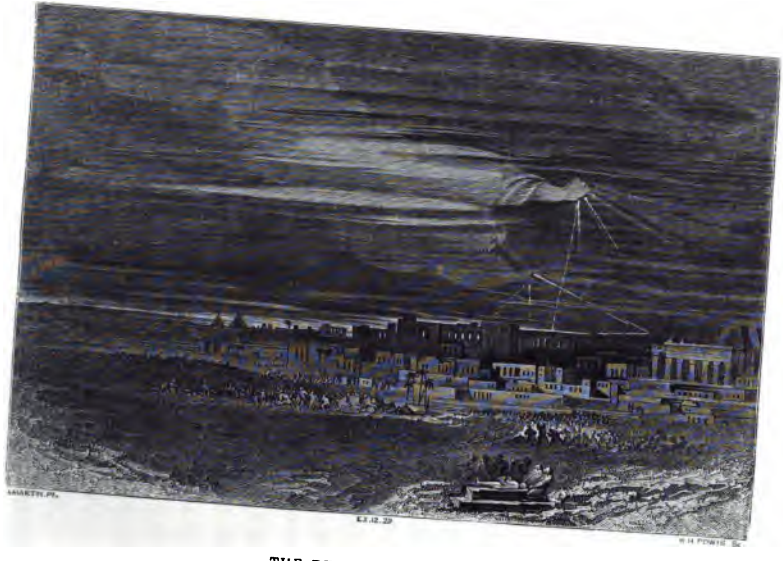
The Lord had reserved his most terrible scourge for the last. "Yet one more plague," He said, "I will bring upon Pharaoh and upon Egypt, and afterwards he will let you go: yea, he will thrust you hence altogether. Speak now, therefore, to the people, that every man may borrow of his neighbour, and every woman of her neighbour, jewels of silver and of gold."

And the people did as they were commanded, and finding favour, through the grace of God, in the sight of the Egyptians, the latter were stripped of the greater portion of their wealth; which, at their request, they lent to the Hebrews, to enable them to make a display of riches and finery when they should go forth; for it was not known that the Israelites intended not to return. At that time, too, it was that the Lord instituted the feast of the Passover, in perpetual remembrance of the miracles He had wrought in favour of His chosen people, and of His mercy in sparing the Israelites, when He should pass through the land of Egypt, and smite all the first-born of the household, and of the subjects of Pharaoh.

It was a day of festival and rejoicing throughout the land;

the birthday of Pharaoh; a day of cessation from labour; in which the slave-master ceased to goad, and the slave had leisure to brood over his injuries, and recollect the half-obliterated memory of all he had to forgive and to avenge. The sun went down in purple and crimson majesty; but mirth and music ceased not with the departure of day. The festal lamps shone brightly in the halls of Egypt, far into the night, when suddenly there fell deep awe and silence upon the regal city; spreading gradually from town to town and village to village, till it pervaded the whole kingdom. There was a spell upon man and woman: the dancers paused amid the voluptuous measure, with wreathing arms still entwined around those they loved; the music was stayed; the joyous song died on the lips of the minstrel, and the intoxicating draught was suspended in the hand of the bacchanalian. A solemn whisper, an involuntary tremor, a fearful beating of the heart, and crawling of the flesh, passed from one to another. Each gazed with astonishment and fear in the face of his companion; each felt conscious of a mysterious and unearthly presence; but none could stir to flee, nor utter his thought to his neighbour.

The destroying angel hovered over Egypt. A moment after, and a flash of lurid and ghastly light filled the land; and all first-born among the Egyptians were stricken with mortal



THE DESTROYING ANGEL.

anguish; from the first-born of the diademed Pharaoh, sitting in regal splendour on his throne, to the first-born of the wretched captive who languished in the dungeon; all the first-born of man, and the first-born of cattle. In an instant, convulsed features, livid lips, and glassy eyes, shewed that death was abroad, and had entered every household to reap a harvest of firstlings. Every parent was bereaved of his eldest hope. The mother, even while she folded her infant to her bosom, to shield it from the wrath that seemed to be impending, felt that it was stiffening in her embrace. Husbands, wives, lovers, brothers, sisters; the lovely, the gay, the tender, the hopeful, and the hopeless, were struck down without either note or warning. An universal cry of horror arose —a shriek of agony, a wail of sorrow; such as had never been heard in Egpyt since the world was created. There was not a house of the Egyptians in which one corpse at least was not found; but among the children of Israel not a soul died: not so much as a dog moved his tongue against them or theirs.

Then Pharaoh and all the Egyptians hastened forth from their houses and streets, as if death were there only; and they sent for Moses and Aaron ere it was day; and the panic-stricken king exclaimed, "Arise, get you forth from among my people; and go, serve the Lord as ye have said. Take your flocks and herds, and begone; and bless me also, ere

ye depart." And the Egyptians urged the Israelites to hasten; for they thought that if the people lingered, all the inhabitants of the land would be slain.

So the Hebrews went forth, taking with them their goods, their children, and their servants; and laden with the raiment, the jewels, the gold and silver, which they had borrowed from the Egyptians. And they journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, towards the wilderness of the Red Sea; for the Lord led them not towards the land of the Philistines, though it was near, lest the people, being unskilled in war, should, on meeting with opposition, return to their bondage in Egypt. About six hundred thousand men, besides women and children, and a mixed multitude of servants and others, went out of Egypt to return to the land of Canaan; whence the Israelites had been detained four hundred and thirty years; and with them were great droves of cattle, and flocks of sheep, and many horses, and asses, and camels. And Moses took with him the bones of Joseph, to bury beside those of the patriarchs of his race, in the land which had been promised to Abraham and his seed. They were guided in their journeyings by the Lord himself; who caused a cloudy pillar to move before them by day, and a pillar of fire by night. Where the pillar rested, there halted the people; and when the pillar went forward the people proceeded on their way, whether by night or day.

Now, when it was told Pharaoh that the Hebrews had gone by the way of the Red Sea, and were entangled in the wilderness, he repented having liberated such a multitude of slaves; and his heart was turned against them in anger; increased, perhaps, by the knowledge that the Egyptians had been stripped of much valuable property, ere the Israelites departed.

So the king caused six hundred chosen chariots to be made ready, and all the other war-chariots of Egypt; and having appointed captains to each of them, he called together his people, and hastened to pursue the fugitives, with a great army of horsemen, footmen, and charioteers.

The Israelites were then encamped by the Red Sea, beside Pihahiroth, before Baal-zephon; and when they learned that the Egyptians marched after them, they were smitten with terror, and prayed for deliverance to the Lord; at the same time reproaching Moses as the author of the miserable fate which they apprehended. "Were there no graves in Egypt," they cried, "that thou hast brought us away to perish in the wilderness? Did we not say to thee in Egypt, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians?"

But Moses, inspired by the Lord, answered them, "Be tranquil, and fear not; and ye shall see the salvation of the Lord. The Egyptians, whom ye have beheld in the

distance to-day, ye shall see again no more, for ever. The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace."

Then the angel of God, who went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind it; and the pillar of the cloud also went from the front to the rear; becoming thus a cloud of darkness to the Egyptians, but giving light as before to the Israelites.

In the evening Moses stretched forth his hand over the Red Sea, and the Lord caused the sea to be divided by a strong east wind, and to go back throughout the night; making an ebb tide without reflux, till it became dry land in the midst. The children of Israel then, at the commandment of Jehovah, marched through the sea upon the dry ground; the waters standing on their right hand and on their left, as walls. But, when Pharaoh and his host pursued, the Lord caused them to be troubled in mind, and hindered by seeming accidents on their march. Their chariot-wheels came off, so that the drivers could scarcely proceed; and horses and men continually foundered, till the Egyptians exclaimed, "Let us flee from the Israelites; for the Lord fighteth for them against us."

When, therefore, the Egyptians slackened their pace, from weariness and fear, Moses, extending his rod over the sea, brought back the waters over Pharaoh and his host. It was in vain that the king and his people, his charioteers, his horse-

men, and his bands of footmen, sought to return to the shore. The engulphing waves rushed over them, and their wild cries rose to the surface but as so many eddying bubbles. The whole army that followed Pharaoh; the monarch himself; his chariots, and his horses, were overthrown in the midst of the sea. When the waters were completely mingled, there remained not one of the multitude that had gone forth to reduce the Hebrews to their olden captivity. In the morning the coast was covered with their dead bodies.

Thus the Lord saved the children of Israel from the hand of the Egyptians; and the people, seeing His great work, feared the Lord, and believed in him and in his servant Moses. And they sang to the Lord a song of praise and thanksgiving:—

"Sound the loud timbrel o'er Egypt's dark sea!
Jehovah hath triumph'd—His people are free.
Sing—for the pride of the tyrant is broken;
His chariots and horsemen, all splendid and brave;—
How vain was their boasting! The Lord hath but spoken,
And chariots and horsemen are sunk in the wave.
Sound the loud timbrel o'er Egypt's dark sea;
Jehovah hath triumphed—His people are free!"

THE ISRAELITES IN THE WILDERNESS.

The children of Israel, delivered from all fear of Pharaoh and his host, journeyed onward to the wilderness of Shur; but, in the course of a three days' march, they found no water; and when at length they reached the springs of Marah, they could not drink thereof, for the waters were bitter. Then the people murmured against their leader; and were dissatisfied that he had brought them from Egpyt, without having ascertained that there would be ample provision for them by the way in which they were journeying. Humanly considered, it must be admitted that the prospects of the Hebrews were, at this time, by no means the most cheering. They had admitted the chieftainship of Moses and of Aaron, on account of the miracles which those chosen agents of the Lord had been enabled to perform in Egypt; and because it was believed that they would be enabled, by a succession of wonders, to overcome all difficulties which might occur during the advance of the multitude to the land of Canaan. A reliance of this kind must have required strong faith in the imme-

diate protection of the Almighty; and to be secure in the continuance of this favour, faith should have been accompanied by sincere love of God, and obedience to his known will. The Israelites, on the contrary, appear to have been an obstinate and self-willed people; accepting every boon conferred on them rather as a matter of right, than of Divine favour; and reckoning more upon the promises made to their ancestors, than upon any merits or efforts at well-doing of their own. Hence, their conscience must have smote them, at every appearance of impending danger, with a sense of their unworthiness; and they grew clamorous in proportion as their fears deserved to be fulfilled. The account of the wanderings of the Israelites in the wilderness, is full of instances of the wayward self-sufficiency of the people, and of the enduring mercy and kindness of God; and, moreover, it is full of awful instances of the penance exacted by the Supreme, for sin against his holy name and word; and of retributive justice, inflicted upon the hardened offenders.

At Shur, when the congregation murmured, Moses prayed to the Lord for direction; and Jehovah shewed him a tree, and commanded him to cast it into the waters; which being done, the springs instantly became sweet, so that the people could satisfy their thirst. At the same time God declared himself unto the Israelites, saying, "If ye will diligently hearken

to the voice of the Lord your God, and will do that which is right in His sight, and will give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statues, I will put none of those diseases upon you, which I have brought upon the Egyptians; for I am the Lord that healeth you."

Notwithstanding this promise, however, and the miracle by which it was accompanied, the children of Israel soon afterwards, when the provisions which they had brought with them from Egypt were exhausted, murmured again; exclaiming, "Would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord, in the land of Egypt; when we sat by the flesh-pots, and did eat bread to the full: for ye, Moses and Aaron, have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill the whole assembly with hunger."

Still the Lord, mindful of the frailty of human nature, and desirous of detaching his people from evil courses, by kindness rather than terror; and of manifesting to the world his power and goodness, instead of punishing those who doubted and repined, exhibited his supremacy before them by a new miracle. At even, shoals of quails flew hovering over the earth, and alighted near the Hebrew camp; so wearied on the wing, that they were unable to resume their flight when the people came to take them, but suffered themselves to be caught and killed; and in the morning, a thick dew lay

round about the host, which, being dispersed at sunrise, left upon the ground a small round substance, which was like coriander-seed, white, and tasting like wafers made with honey; and the people used it for bread, and called it manna. Thus, morning and evening the Israelites were fed, without other toil than that of collecting their food: every day they gathered sufficient for the day's consumption, except on the sixth day, when each gathered enough for the sabbath also; because, at the creation of the world, the Lord had ordained that the seventh day should be a day of rest and holiness, for ever. Nevertheless, some of the impious went forth on the seventh as on other days, but there was neither fall of manna nor flight of quails.

As if nothing would satisfy or convince the Israelites that they ought implicitly to rely on the salvation of the Lord, they again broke forth in open discontent against Moses, at Rephidim, because there was no water. Moses was driven almost to despair by their reproaches; and he entreated the Lord, saying, "What shall I do unto this people? They are almost ready to stone me."

Not even yet, however, did Jehovah determine to punish. "Go on," He said to His chosen minister, "before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel; and thy rod wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand and go. Be-

hold, I will stand before thee there, upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink."

According to the commandment of the Lord so did Moses. He smote the rock, and a pure stream gushed forth; a cool and refreshing fountain in the great desert, where no green thing had formerly been able to endure the burning heat and choking sand. In the language of the Psalmist, "The people drank, as from the great deep."

While the Hebrews were still encamped at Rephidim, Amalek, a descendant of Esau, and chief of one of the wandering tribes which infested the Arabian deserts—partly for the sake of plundering travelling merchants, and partly to make sudden marauding incursions into the cities and towns of Egypt, and of the land of Canaan—came with his band of warriors against the Israelites, hoping to obtain a rich booty from the conquest of such a vast multitude. His faith in the promises of the Lord, alone endued Moses with fortitude to meet these daring freebooters; for the people were wholly unaccustomed to war, and could have been but very imperfectly armed. Relying, however, in the guardianship of Him who had opened to His people a road through the sea, and spread for them a bounteous table in the wilderness, the prophet chose Joshua, the son of Nun, of the tribe of Ephraim, to be captain

AMALEK OVERCOME.

over the host; and directing him to choose men to fight with the Amalekites, Moses himself, with his brother Aaron, and Hur, an elder of the tribe of Judah, believed to be the husband of Miriam, Moses' sister, went to the top of Mount Horeb, to propitiate the Lord for his assistance.

And it came to pass that, as Joshua and his companions fought with the Amalekites, while Moses, standing on the hill, held up his hand, bearing the rod with which so many miracles had previously been wrought, the children of Israel prevailed against their enemies; but when he let down his hand the Israelites gave ground. This was another visible manifestation of Divine agency being vested in Moses; which being perceived by Aaron and Hur, they, when the hands of their kinsman and leader grew heavy, so that, from fatigue, he could no longer keep them upraised, brought a stone for him to sit upon; and held up his hands, the one on the right and the other on the left side, till the going down of the sun; when the Amalekites being thoroughly defeated, fled before Joshua and his victorious troops.

The events of this memorable day were, at the command of the Lord, forthwith written in a book; and Moses built, on the place where he had sat, an altar, to which he gave the name of Jehovah-nissi (the Lord, my banner); not only because of the great victory which had been gained, but to com-

memorate what the Lord had said, that "The remembrance of Amalek should be utterly put out from under heaven."

Shortly after this period, Jethro, the father of Moses' wife, having heard of the wonders which God had wrought in Egypt, in favour of the Israelites, came forth to meet his son-in-law; bringing with him Zipporah, the wife of the prophet, and her two sons, Gershom and Eliezer. And Moses welcomed the good old priest, and told him all that had befallen since their parting in Midian; and Jethro praised the name of Jehovah, and offered to Him a burnt-offering and sacrifices for his goodness, saying, "Now I know that the Lord is greater than all gods; for in the things wherein they dealt proudly He was above them." Then Moses made a feast for his father-in-law; and Aaron and all the elders of Israel did eat the bread of friendship with him before God.

Jethro stayed but a short time in the camp of the Israelites. Ere he returned to his own country, however, he gave some valuable and acceptable advice to his son-in-law; seeing that the whole labour of judging all matters of difference among the people, of regulating their conduct, and exhorting them concerning their duties, devolved upon Moses, he exclaimed, "This is not good. Thou wilt surely wear away, my son, thou and the people that is with thee; for this thing is too heavy for thee: thou art not able to perform it thyself

alone. Thou shouldst be for the people to God-ward; to teach them ordinances and laws, and shew them the way wherei they must walk, and the work they must do. Provide, therefore, from among the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens. Let them judge the people at all seasons: every great matter they shall bring unto thee; but every small matter they shall judge: so shall it be easier for thyself, and they shall bear the burden with thee."

This counsel Moses forthwith adopted; and thus the first form of government by minor judges, under one chief, was introduced among the tribes of Israel; a form of government which, with slight modifications, endured for four hundred and forty-four years.

In the third month after the departure of the Israelites from Egypt, they pitched their tents in the desert, before Mount Sinai. There the Lord had chosen to reveal Himself more fully than He had ever before done to fallen man. There He conversed with His servant Moses, and declared His Divine will in language not to be misunderstood or misinterpreted: in language which, in all nations, by all people, Christian, Jew, and Mahomedan, is now, and ever must be reverenced, as the basis of all duties and obligations from

the creature to his Creator; and of all law and justice between man and man. All that man owes, or can owe, to God or his fellow man, is comprehended in the moral law delivered from Mount Sinai; and this law all men, under pain of the Divine displeasure and punishment, are bound to obey. "Speak ye now to the house of Jacob," said Jehovah, "and tell the children of Israel:—Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. Now, therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people; for all the earth is mine; and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation."

And when Moses had told these words unto the people, and obtained their promise to do all that God had spoken, the Lord commanded that they should be sanctified, and should cleanse their raiment during two days; as on the third He would come down in visible majesty and glory before them, upon Mount Sinai. The congregation, accordingly, performed their ablutions scrupulously, and by prayer and thanksgiving, and, by recounting the miracles which had been performed in their presence, and in the presence of their forefathers, of which tradition had preserved the memory, they sought to prepare themselves befittingly for the great revelation now about to be made to them.

On the third day, in the morning, it came to pass that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount; and an unseen trumpet sounded long and loud, with a blast such as mortal never blew, and human ears had never before heard. All the people that were in the camp trembled. Moses, however, according to the commands which he had received, led the people towards the mount, to meet with God. Sinai was enveloped in smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire; and the smoke ascended as the smoke of a furnace. The whole mountain quaked, as if conscious of its Maker's presence. Then the Lord, in the hearing of all the people, spake these words:—

"I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

"Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

"Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or the likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

"Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain;

for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

"Remember the sabbath-day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor the stranger that is within thy gates: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath-day, and hallowed it.

"Honour thy father and thy mother; that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

"Thou shalt not kill.

"Thou shalt not commit adultery.

"Thou shalt not steal.

"Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.

"Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbour's."

And when the people heard the thunder, and the noise of the trumpet, and saw the lightnings, and the mountain smoking, they were afraid, and said to Moses, "Speak thou

with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die."

Moses answered them, "Fear not: for God is come to prove you, that the fear of Him may be for ever before you, in order to preserve you from sin, that so you may never die."

Then Moses, ascending the mount, drew near unto the thick darkness where God was; and the Lord communed with Moses in the midst of the cloud, and declared unto him His will concerning the establishment of the moral, the ceremonial, and the civil law. Forty days and forty nights was Moses separated from the children of Israel; holding converse with the Most High, concerning the future government, the hopes and destinies of His chosen people. The glory of the Lord, meanwhile, abode upon Mount Sinai; appearing in the eyes of the Israelites like devouring fire. Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and seventy of the elders of the people, who were permitted to approach the holy place more nearly than the multitude, saw the Deity himself. And when the Lord had made an end of communing with Moses, He gave him two stone tables of testimony, written with the finger of God, to be a memorial of their duty for ever: and Moses went forth from the immediate presence of the Supreme to return to his countrymen, who were encamped on the plain below.

It is scarcely possible to form an adequate conception of the

universal corruption into which mankind had fallen, before the promulgation of the Mosaic law. Some idea, however, may be gathered from the conduct of the Israelites—probably the least depraved people then upon the earth—while Moses tarried on Sinai, in their own presence, conversing with the God whose voice they had so recently heard, declaring his sovereign pleasure in thunder from on high. They had all trembled at the command, "Thou shalt have none other gods but me;" yet, ere the echo of those words had died, and while his great legation was still in course of delivery to their leader, the wayward congregation gathered around Aaron, crying, "Make us gods to go before us; for as for this Moses, the man who brought us out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him." They had witnessed such general idolatry during their bondage, that they could not comprehend the notion of a purely spiritual Deity, nor entertain a belief in that which was not palpable; as if the Creator were not always distinctly seen in His magnificent works, and felt in His governing power over the universe: while, on the contrary, the idols, whom their taskmasters had worshipped, were merely things of growth and decay, without inherent life, attributes, or intelligence. Knowing all this, however, Aaron, overawed by the clamours of his countrymen, yielded to their impious demands; and from their golden ornaments, which

they willingly parted with to satisfy their wicked desires, made them a molten calf and set it up, with an altar for sacrifice, before them The people then made a great feast in honour of their idol, and offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings; and proclaimed in the public camp, "These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of Egypt!" They sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play; content with a divinity of their own construction, but utterly unmindful of the Lord Jehovah, whose cloudy pillar still guided them by day, and whose column of fire still illumined the darkness of their night; who still sent quails for their sustenance at eventide, and manna for their morning repast.

Moses, hastening down from the mountain, with the two tables of testimony in his hand, arrived at the foot of the mount, where he had left Joshua—when the latter, having heard the noise made by the multitude in their rejoicing, hastened to meet the prophet, crying "There is a noise of war in the camp."

Moses, however, distinguishing the sounds better than his lieutenant, replied, "Nay; it is not the voice of them that shout for mastery, nor of them that cry for being overcome; but the noise of singing that I hear."

As he drew nigh, and discerned the golden calf, and the profane dancing of the Israelites before the unholy altar,

the anger of Moses was kindled against the people; and in haste and inconsideration he cast from him the divine tables, that were in his hands, and brake them at the foot of the mount; and he took the idol which Aaron had made, and, after burning it in the fire, ground it to powder, and strewing it upon the water, gave it to the children of Israel to drink. In order to punish the idolators for their sin on this occasion, and to deter others from a repetition of the offence, Moses, at the command of the Lord, caused the the Levites, who appear to have been least tainted with the prevailing spirit of rebellion, to pass through the camp and slay every person who should be found retaining any tokens of adherence to the heathen worship, by which the whole congregation had been defiled. Under this edict, there were that day slaughtered of the multitude about three thousand men; in addition to which the people were sorely plagued with diseases of body and mind, and the Lord refused any longer to accompany the tribes as he was wont.

Moses, greatly grieved at the heavy displeasure manifested by Jehovah, returned to the mount to entreat for his brethren. "This people," he said, "have sinned a great sin in making them gods of gold; yet now, if thou wilt forgive them, thy mercy shall appear; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of the book which thou hast written."

But the Lord answered, "Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book. In the day of my visitation I will visit their sins upon the sinners. Nevertheless, depart thou, and go hence; thou, and the people which thou hast brought up out of the land of Egypt, unto the land which I sware unto Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, Unto thy seed will I give it. I will send an angel before thee; but I will not go up in the midst of thee; for thou art a stiff-necked people; lest I consume thee by the way."

Though the Lord, however, refused to again grace the Israelites with His presence, yet He renewed the tables which had been broken, and continued to guide the people by the pillars of fire and of cloud, as before; and to distinguish His servant Moses, He not only conversed with him from time to time, but gave him a view of the supreme glory; and endowed him with part of the Shechinah, or divine radiance, that it might be seen among the congregation that he was indeed the appointed instrument of the Most High.

Moses now proceeded, with all diligence, to bring into operation the laws which God had delivered to him. He caused a tabernacle, for worship, to be constructed; he wrote the statutes and ordinances of the Lord in a book; and consecrated the tribe of Levi to the priesthood, appointing his brother

Aaron to be high-priest. He also began at this time to train and discipline the people, and to introduce regular forms and ceremonies into the service of the altar; that due decorum might be observed when the people humbled themselves in prayer before God. And that this was all done by direct inspiration from Jehovah himself, an awful proof was afforded in the destruction by fire of two of the sons of Aaron,—Nadab and Abihu; when, in wanton wilfulness, they sought to offer sacrifice, contrary to the instituted form.

Next, the people were numbered and divided into bands, according to their tribes and families; each band having its respective officers appointed, and its station assigned it in the camp. Six hundred and three thousand five hundred and fifty men, all above twenty years old, and able to bear arms, constituted the Israelitish army; and of the tribe of Levi,—the priests,—there were twenty-two thousand persons.

In the second month of the second year after the departure from Egypt, the encampment broke up from the neighbourhood of Mount Sinai, and marched towards the wilderness of Paran; the warriors of the tribe of Judah leading the van, and guarding the ark of covenant, upon which by day the pillar of cloud, and by night that of fire rested. When the ark set forward Moses exclaimed, "Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies

be scattered; and let them that hate thee flee before thee;" and when it rested he said, "Return, O Lord, unto the many thousands of Israel."

The march of the people was still occasionally interrupted by their discontents. At Taberah their complaining kindled the anger of the Lord; and many of them, at the extremities of the camp, were consumed by fire from heaven. At Kibroth-hattaavah, also, a great plague was sent among the Israelites, for their repinings against the manna with which they were fed.

At Hazeroth even Miriam and Aaron, the sister and brother of Moses, joined those who spoke seditiously against him, making his marriage with Zipporah, a foreign woman, the pretext of their rebellion. "Hath the Lord, indeed, spoken only by Moses?" said they. "Hath he not spoken also by us?"

But the Lord heard their clamours and revilings; and, in order to justify his minister, without humiliating the high-priest or Miriam before the congregation, he called the three together into the tabernacle; and, rebuking the evil-speakers for their arrogance and envy, said, "With my faithful servant Moses will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the Lord shall he behold: but unto other prophets I will make myself known only in visions."

And when the Lord left speaking, the cloud departed from off the tabernacle; and Miriam was smitten with leprosy, and became white as snow. The sight of this fearful infliction, no less, perhaps, than the words of God, had an immediate effect on Aaron, as well as on the culprit who had experienced such heavy displeasure; and they cried to their brother, "Alas! we beseech thee, lay not the sin upon us, wherein we have done foolishly. Let not thy sister be as one dead."

Moses therefore interceded with the Lord, and after undergoing a penance of seven days' exclusion from the camp and congregation, as a defiled person, she was restored to her health and family.

The Israelites then proceeded in their march towards Canaan; and soon arriving upon the borders of that promised land, twelve men, one from each tribe, except that of Levi, were sent forward as spies, to search and bring a report of the country, as to its fertility and productions, and whether the inhabitants were strong or weak, few or many. This was the time of the first ripe grapes.

The mission of the spies occupied forty days, during which the host of the Israelites remained at Kadesh, in the wilderness of Paran. The multitude indulged in the most delightful anticipations when they saw their twelve countrymen return to the camp, laden with pomegranates and figs, and a rich cluster

MIRIAM STRICKEN WITH LEPROSY.

of grapes, so heavy that it required to be borne by two men upon a staff. The report of the emissaries, however, was less gratifying than had been hoped. "We came," said they, "unto the land whither we were sent; and surely it is a fertile, pleasant land; and this is the fruit thereof. Nevertheless, the people that dwell in the land are powerful, and the cities are walled and large; and, moreover, we saw there the gigantic sons of Anak."

At these tidings the people were filled with terror and dismay. They had languished so long in slavery, that both mental and physical powers had degenerated; and the fear of encountering the warlike races, of whom they now heard,—and who were represented by some of the spies as men of such great stature, that the Israelites were but as grasshoppers in comparison with them,—banished all confidence in the Divine protection and assistance. The whole congregation, consequently, with one accord, exclaimed, "Would to God we had died in the land of Egypt, or in this wilderness! Wherefore hath the Lord brought us hither, to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children may be a prey? Were it not better for us to return to Egypt?"

It was in vain that Caleb, a chief of the tribe of Judah, and Joshua, the son of Nun, endeavoured to dissipate the fears of the people, crying, "Nay, let us go up at once; for we are well able to overcome our enemies: the land is an exceedingly

good land, flowing with milk and honey; and the Lord our defence is with us, and will establish us therein."

The Israelites threatened to stone these distinguished persons, for their courage and honesty; and exclaimed, more loudly and furiously than ever, "Let us elect a captain, and return into Egypt."

While the contention was proceeding, the glory of the Lord appeared in the tabernacle, before all the children of Israel; and the Lord, calling Moses to him, said that, because of the iniquity of the people and of their unbelief, notwithstanding all the signs He had shewn them, none of the generation then living, except Caleb and Joshua, should enter into the land of Canaan, to possess it. "Their carcasses," He said, "shall fall in this wilderness, even all that were numbered of them which have murmured against me; but their little ones, which they said should become a prey, they shall know and inherit the land which their fathers have despised. Forty years shall they and their children wander in the wilderness, till their carcases are wasted. All this evil congregation shall be consumed and die. To-morrow turn ye, and get into the wilderness by way of the Red Sea."

Of the thirty-eight succeeding years, little of the history of the tribes of Israel is known, save that the word of God was literally fulfilled as to the wanderings of the congregation;

and that, in the many battles and skirmishes which took place with the hordes by which the desert was infested, the rebellious generation of Hebrews was nearly exterminated, while those that sprung up in their stead, not only became better disciplined, and more inured to war, but, by witnessing the constant succession of miracles, by which they were guided and sustained, they learned to trust implicitly in the promises and protection of Jehovah. Several rebellions, and their punishment, are recorded of this period; in one of which the earth miraculously opened, and swallowed the ringleader of the factious and his household, while fire devoured his followers; and in another the plague cut off fourteen thousand seven hundred persons.

At length, the period of their probation approaching its end, the Israelites once more turned their steps towards Canaan, and encamped again at Kadesh, from which point they had originally retreated. Here Miriam, the sister of Moses, died; and Moses and Aaron were forewarned by the Lord that, for some mistrust which they had there exhibited, and for other offences in various portions of their ministerial career, they should not be permitted to go with the Israelites into the promised land.

From Kadesh the people were compelled to make a circuitous march round the lake of Sodom; retrograding for that purpose nearly as far as the Red Sea, in order to avoid

an encounter with the Edomites, whom they were forbidden to attack, because they were descendants of Esau; and to gain a more accessible entrance to Palestine, by crossing the Jordan, and proceeding at once into the heart of the richest and least defensible part of the country.

On Mount Hor Aaron the high-priest died, and was succeeded in his office by his son Eleazer. It was about this period that, for their renewed murmurings, a plague of fiery serpents was sent among the congregation, which consumed many persons; and was stayed only at the intercession of Moses, who was commanded to erect, probably as a test of faith, a brazen serpent, on which by gazing steadfastly those who had been bitten were instantly cured.

The struggles between the inhabitants of the borders of Canaan, on the one hand to restrain the advance of the Israelites and on the other to obtain possession of the whole country, now produced almost incessant conflicts; in all of which, through the interposition of the Lord of Hosts, the children of Israel were triumphant. At Hormah, Arad, a Canaanitish king, was defeated, and his cities and people utterly destroyed, Sihon, king of the Amorites, also, and Og, the gigantic king of Bashan, were slain; and their territories captured and parted among the victors. The Moabites and Midianites too, not however without fighting, gave way

before the congregation; and a report preceded the children of Israel, which convinced the natives of Palestine that the God of Jacob was powerful, both to save and to destroy; and that there was none like Him among all the idol gods of the heathen.

The road being now open for the final conquest of the inheritance reserved for the seed of Abraham, the Lord commanded Moses to go up into Mount Abarim, otherwise called Pisgah or Nebo, to see the promised land, which he was not to enter. "And when thou hast seen it," said Jehovah, "thou also shalt be gathered unto thy people, as Aaron thy brother was gathered." At this solemn intimation, Moses entreated the Almighty that "He would set a man over the congregation, to go out before them, and in before them; that they might not be as sheep having no shepherd." The Lord accordingly appointed Joshua to succeed to the command of the tribes; and he having been consecrated by Moses before the people, and received a charge to obey the word of God, which, as far as it had been revealed, Moses communicated to him, by placing him in possession of the books of the law, was inducted into his high office, and invested with its powers and functions.

Moses then ascended the mountain which had been indicated to him, and surveyed the scene from which he was to be excluded. It was, indeed, a goodly prospect. On his right

were the upland pastures of Gilead, and the woody hills of Bashan. The meanders of the Jordan were distinguishable for leagues, flowing on through the most delicious vales that the sun of heaven could shine upon; till, almost at the foot of Abarim, it emptied itself into the Dead Sea. To the north spread the luxuriant plains of Esdraelon, and the hilly but fruitful country of Galilee. In front was the large and wealthy city of Jericho, embowered in groves of palm, and encircled by luxuriant vineyards; and beyond were the mountains of Judea, rising like terraces above each other till they reached the Mediterranean Sea. "This," said the Lord, "is the land which I sware unto Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, I will give it unto thy seed."

Moses was then a hundred and twenty years old. His eye was not dim, nor his natural strength abated; but his last hour was come. While gazing on the magnificent prospect before him, his spirit, without the customary agony of mortal separation, passed from earth to heaven. He was buried by the Lord himself, in a valley in the land of Moab; but his followers were not permitted to know the place of his sepulture, lest perhaps they should be tempted to surround his bones by a shrine, and to pay divine honours to his name.

DEATH OF MOSES ON MOUNT NEBO.

THE CONQUEST OF CANAAN.

IMMEDIATELY after the death of Moses, the Lord communicated his will to Joshua, the newly appointed leader of the Israelites. He was commanded to go over Jordan, to take possession of the heritage which had been promised to the descendants of Abraham. From the wilderness and mount Lebanon, unto the river Euphrates and the great sea, the congregation were to occupy the whole country.

Joshua accordingly, having made all necessary preparations, by provisioning his army, sending spies to see the condition of the road by which he must march, and of the city of Jericho, on which his first attack was to be made, set forward and came, in one day, to the banks of the Jordan, the boundary of the fertile land of promise. Here another miracle was performed in behalf of the Hebrews. At the point where it was desired to cross, the stream, which always overflowed its banks in harvest weather, was not fordable, and Joshua had neither boat nor raft with which to effect the passage. The Lord therefore parted the waters, as he had

done in the Red Sea, so that the flood which came down towards the lake of Sodom was arrested in its progress, and stood piled, like a wall, in the midst of its channel, while the people walked dry-shod through the bed of the river. From this period the children of Israel obtained supplies of corn and meat in Palestine, and the manna and quails, with which they had been fed during their wanderings, ceased. Henceforth, also, the ordinary course of nature operated with regard to their vestments, their tents, their arms, and their shoes, which previously had been preserved from destruction or decay by Divine interposition.

The Canaanitish kings and princes, when they heard how Jehovah had brought his people into their land, were stricken with amazement and fear; nevertheless they fortified their cities and towns, and determined to offer the utmost resistance to the invaders. Jericho was forthwith besieged; but as the Hebrews had no battering-rams or scaling-ladders, and but few other munitions of war, the Lord again displayed his favour and might, by causing the walls of the city to fall down at the blast of the Levites' trumpets, and by delivering the place a prey to his worshippers, without subjecting them to the hazards and loss incident to warlike operations. All that were in Jericho, men, women, and children, except one family, a member of which had been kind to the spies of Joshua,

were put to death; and the city was spoiled and delivered to the flames, and a heavy curse denounced against whosoever should seek, at any future time, to restore it from its ruins.

From Jericho the army proceeded to Ai; but here in their first assault the Iraelites were unsuccessful. This was a judgment on them, because one of their number had defiled himself by pilfering, for his own use, from among the spoils of Jericho, some of the gold and silver which should have been dedicated to the service of the Lord. The transgressor, however, having been detected, and stoned to death, Ai also was captured, its inhabitants put to the sword, and its king hanged upon a tree, and buried beneath a great heap of stones at the entrance of the city, which, like Jericho, was consumed by fire.

The princes and chiefs of Canaan now formed a confederacy against the common enemy; the inhabitants of Gibeon alone holding aloof from the league, being desirous to form an alliance with a foe which it seemed impossible to withstand. These people, "working wilily," sent to Joshua a deputation, with old sacks upon their asses, with leathern wine-bottles, old and rent and bound up, old clouted shoes upon their feet, and old garments upon their loins, with provisions dry and mouldy, to pretend that they had come from a far country, and desired peace and amity with Israel. Joshua, deceived

by appearances, made a convention with these crafty ambassadors, who thus escaped the destruction with which their country was threatened; but their dissimulation was not permitted to go unpunished. When the trick by which they had beguiled the Israelites was detected, their whole race was condemned by Joshua to be perpetual bondmen, hewers of wood and drawers of water for the house of the Lord. Their countrymen also, when informed of their defection, seem to have entertained stronger hatred against them than against the foreign enemy who had appeared among them, and made a fierce war upon their city; insomuch that Joshua, as an ally, was compelled to hasten to the mountains, to save them from destruction.

It was by a night march that the children of Israel ascended from Gilgal to Gibeon, which was then beleaguered by the troops of five Amoritish kings, at the head of whom was Adonizedek, king of Jerusalem. The rapidity of his march, the valour of his followers, and the suddenness of his onset, but, above all, the aid and encouragement of the Almighty, enabled Joshua utterly to defeat and rout his opponents, who fled before his host from Gibeon to Azekah, Makkedah, and Beth-horon, until the hour of sun-down. Terrible was the slaughter wrought by the Israelites on that day; and even rendered more fearful by Jehovah, at whose word a

JOSHUA COMMANDING THE SUN TO STAND STILL.

storm arose, and hail-stones were cast from heaven upon the Canaanites in such huge masses that those who escaped the sword perished amid the tempest. The number slain by the hail was greater than that of those who fell in the battle and pursuit.

The flower and pride of five nations thus disappeared from the face of the earth, because by their crimes and idolatry they had offended God. The day was prolonged to afford light for their destruction. At the entreaty of Joshua the sun stood still upon Gibeon, and the moon in the valley of Ajalon, while the Israelites avenged themselves upon their enemies. Darkness hovered on the verge of the horizon, but had no power to ascend from the abyss. For thirty-six hours the mountains and vales of Judea had continual sunshine, and the system of the universe paused in mid-career, There was no day like that before or after it, when the Lord hearkened to the voice of a man. Thus was it known over the whole East, and eventually spread abroad throughout the world, that the Lord fought for his chosen people Israel.

The conquest of Palestine progressed rapidly after these events. Thirty-one kings did Joshua the sun of Nun subdue in the land of Canaan, and their territories he divided among the children of Israel, according to their tribes and families,—the Levites only being excluded from any division, because to

them appertained the tenths of the increase of the whole congregation. But though Canaan might thus be considered conquered, its inhabitants were not, as God had commanded, wholly expelled nor extirpated by the victors. Some entire tribes of Philistines and others continued to exist in the land; and these for several ages not only harassed the Israelites with hostilities, but from time to time seduced them into the commission of idolatry, by which they incurred the anger of the Lord. During the life-time of Joshua, however, and of the elders who, having seen the mighty works of the Creator, overlived Joshua, the Hebrews served God with fidelity, and were successful in all their undertakings.

THE END.

Palmer & Clayton, Printers, 9, Crane Court.